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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CENTERING THE MARGINS: ELEVATING THE VOICES OF WOMEN OF COLOR TO
CRITICALLY EXAMINE COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERSHIP

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

NATASHA T. TURMAN

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2017

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In loving memory of my aunt, Helen Y. Jukes

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ABSTRACT

The leadership viewpoints of Women of Color (WOC), in general, and WOC collegians specifically, are not widely available or recognized. This exclusion and oversight is a disservice to all. The inadequate inclusion of WOC's perspective in leadership literature is due to the assumptions of race and gender neutrality in leadership studies. Viewing leadership as a set of universal constructs, garnered from a select few and generalized to a great many, is not adequate to understanding the leadership experiences of WOC within dominant-culture environments. To address these deficits, critical leadership scholars have proposed that leadership be (re)conceptualized from a multicultural perspective, placing the perspectives of marginalized voices at the center of analysis. With that charge, this study explored the leadership experiences of undergraduate WOC college students attending private predominately White institutions (PWIs) of higher education in the United States. Using critical hermeneutic phenomenology, this study sought to better understand how leadership was learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians in the context of their multiple and intersecting social identities. Through 'creative nonfiction' critical transformative dialogue, the essence of leadership was exemplified for collegiate WOC. The findings revealed that leadership as a WOC collegian attending a PWI was first and foremost about identity. Themes emerged at the personal, group, and system level, illustrating the complex web of leadership engagement for collegiate WOC. This study contributes to the knowledge-base on student leadership development and illustrates the importance of centering the lived experience to counter essentialized leadership constructs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Leadership—a concept bound by circumstance, social context, space, and time—has informed and shaped many facets of society. While there is no one universal definition, many individuals aspire to engage in leadership and become leaders. Institutions of higher education boast to produce future leaders and change agents. Organizations seek individuals with the right talents to elevate and lead groups. And, individuals engage in leadership development to harness the necessary skills and abilities they believe (and have been told) are required to be effective leaders. But what does engagement in leadership and the embodiment of a leader look like? What are the standards of what it means to lead and *do* leadership? Who sets these standards? And who may or may not have been considered when they were crafted?

The conceptualization of leadership has evolved, paradigmatically defined by the researchers and social scientists who study it, and perpetuated by the individuals who practice it. As U.S. society has grown more socially diverse and culturally dynamic, so have our interpretations of leadership (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Yet, much of how leadership is practiced and understood within a Western leadership cannon, still relies on dominant leadership paradigms (i.e., worldviews or lenses; Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Dugan, 2017; Kezar et al., 2006). These dominant Western worldviews of leadership situate leadership as hierarchical, positional, static, trait-based, and reserved for the elite; focusing little on diversity, difference, relationships, identity, and social

context (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Dugan, 2017; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006). A significant amount of leadership scholarship rests on the assumption that constructs such as leadership and power, are not attributed to any specific racial or ethnic group (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Consequently, many assume leadership research grounded in White dominant perspectives, can be seamlessly applied to all (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). However, this is not the case. Parker and Ogilvie (1996) posited that leadership traits, behaviors, and styles are influenced by how individuals are socialized and differ by race and gender. Further, Ely et al. (2011) declared, “how people become leaders and how they take up the leader role are fundamentally questions about identity” (p. 476). Yet, women and People of Color (POC) continue to be interpreted, evaluated, and bound by leadership paradigms that fail to consider identity, diversity, social location, and context (Arminio, 1993; Dugan, 2017; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Howard-Hamilton, 2007). This essentialized approach to understanding, describing, and even developing the leadership potential of individuals, fails to meet the needs of a diverse population.

What is required is a disruption of the fixed image of leader and leadership, to re-envision an image in which every person views themselves as leaders capable of engaging in leadership (Byrd, 2008; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker, 2001). Over 20 years ago, Joseph (1994) recognized that a paradigm shift was required to transcend the traditional Western notions of leader and leadership; to usher in new viewpoints, perspectives, and identities. Joseph (1994) noted:

The days of looking for leaders with the right endorsements and the right credentials as defined by an established elite are over. The leaders of the future will not come riding out of the sunset on white chargers—heroes without heroism. Many will instead be ordinary people with extraordinary commitments. Their styles will be different. Their accents will be different and so will their color and complexion. (p. 5)

This leadership paradigm unabashedly includes the voices, perspectives, and experiences of Women of Color (WOC). The term “Women of Color” is used to capture the voice of those who identify as women from racial (e.g., African American/Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latin@, Native American, Multi-racial; defined by physiological characteristics like skin color, phenotype, and hair) and/or ethnic (e.g., defined by cultural factors like language, nationality, religion, and ancestry) minoritized groups in the United States (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). The term has political underpinnings, used to express solidarity between and for groups that have been systematically marginalized because of minoritized social identities (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity; Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa, & Lui, 2015; Vidal-Ortiz, 2008).

From a socio-political lens, WOC reside at the intersection of race and gender, affected by the politics and biases that separate POC from White people, and women from men (Carter et al., 1996; Crenshaw, 1991). Zinn and Dill (1994) argued that WOC experience distinct subordination because of the embedded elements of hierarchy, domination, and marginalization based on one’s race, class, gender, and sexual orientation within the structures of U.S. society. These elements of hierarchy, domination, and marginalization impact the level in which WOC engage in leadership experiences, serve in positional leadership roles, and are motivated to effect change.

Social scientists, feminists, and critical social constructivist leadership researchers have acknowledged that leadership is gendered, contextually based, and shaped by one’s social location (i.e., the groups people belong to because of their position in history and society; often characterized by gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location; Hill-Collins, 2014; Kezar et al., 2006; Levinson, 2011; Ospina & Foldy,

2009; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Levinson (2011) posited,

one's social position and social possibilities are strongly shaped, even determined, by the sense of who we are in relation to others (identity), by what we know about ourselves and the world (knowledge), and by what we are capable of doing with ourselves and others in the world (power). (p. 14)

This is particularly important to consider when examining WOC and their experiences with leadership.

Collegiate WOC

Institutions of higher education continue to serve as prime environments in which leadership is researched, practiced, and developed. From as early as the middle of the 20th century these spaces, that at one time only granted access to White males, have experienced increased representation of individuals from groups that have historically been excluded on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Dancy II, 2010; Palmer, Wood, & Spencer, 2013; Zamani, 2003). WOC are one such group that have been excluded from higher education. U.S. Department of Education statistics illustrate the unequal enrollment between undergraduate WOC and their White counter-parts.

In 1976, fall enrollment for 4-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions by WOC (i.e., Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/ Alaska Native, two or more races) was 8.35 percent of 9.5 million total fall enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015). While these numbers have increased considerably with undergraduate WOC representing 44.2 percent of women enrolled in 4-year postsecondary institutions in the fall of 2014, this number only reflects 24 percent of 17.3 million total number of 2014 fall undergraduate enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015). These disparaging

numbers demonstrate WOC slow but steady presence in higher education.

While the numbers are modest, it is important to understand the nuance of WOC's experiences in college. WOC collegians come to college with very diverse needs, varying goals, and distinct lived experiences. Given their unique social locations, WOC collegians experience college, and life in general, at the intersection of their multiple identities; some cognizant and some unaware of how these complex intersections inform their overall experiences (Guy-Sheftall & Bell-Scott, 1989; Hill-Collins, 2014; Kezar, 2000). Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981), described the intersection of multiple identities as aspects of identity that interlock so powerfully that they are "irreducibly complex intersections" (p. 277).

Collectively, women in higher education still face gendered norms and expectations that can silence their voices and constrain their major selection, engagement in college, and even more, their leadership experiences (Kinzie, Thomas, Palmer, Umbach, & Kuh, 2007). For WOC collegians, the literature has suggested that racialized and gendered perceptions of self, others, and the institutional atmosphere, can affect how WOC collegians engage socially and academically (Astin & Astin, 2000; Miles, Bertrand Jones, Clemons, & Golay, 2011; Winkle-Wagner, 2009b). When we seek to broaden the conceptualizations of leader and leadership, situating these phenomena as receptive of and inclusive to diverse perspectives, it is important to acknowledge the nuanced needs, differences, and social contexts of WOC.

WOC are as diverse as there are colors in the rainbow. Their dynamic identities, enriched by their culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and shaped by the context of their lived experiences, allows each to possess a distinct hue. These hues reflect the uniqueness of WOC. Like a prism, the complexity and beauty emitted when these hues are gathered together are unparalleled. Yet,

our society, our institutions of higher education, even our literature fails to tap into this uniqueness and beauty to gather insight and inspiration to inform how leadership is understood and practiced. As suggested by Parker (2001), “it is fruitful to learn about leadership from the perspective of people who struggle against race, gender, and class oppression” (p. 73).

As this brief introduction has illustrated, and the literature review in Chapter 2 will substantiate, WOC have not transcended the racial, ethnic, cultural, gendered, generational, or socioeconomic boundaries that have confined and limited their growth (Hughes, 1996). These boundaries pose significant challenges when trying to position WOC as viable, noteworthy beings on which knowledge can be learned, change effected, and leadership actualized. WOC collegians’ complex intersections of identity matter when examining their leadership experiences in order to shift the leadership paradigm. The sections that follow shed light into the limited scholarship on WOC and leadership. The insights illuminated provide rationale for this study. The purpose of this study, research questions, and the conceptual framework guiding this study will be presented. Next, a brief overview of the methodology used to implement this study and potential contributions will be shared. This chapter concludes with a review of key terms that provide framing and context for the topic and population being studied.

Statement of the Problem

Scholarship that specifically explores the intersection of leadership development and social identity broadly, and within the postsecondary context, is limited (Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker, 2001; Rosette & Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Consequently, the rate at which research on the leadership experiences of college women as a collective is explored is mediocre. This is problematic considering women

are the majority population in college, and college is considered a key producer of society's 'future leaders' (Selingo, 2013). When WOC collegians are centered, the literature is scarce. Placing attention on social identities and leadership is important because how an individual comes to understand, experience, and navigate life is predicated by their unique social identities and the location of those social identities (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Levinson, 2011; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Tatum, 2011). Belenky et al. (1997) noted:

Our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it. They affect our definitions of ourselves, the way we interact with others, our public and private personae, our sense of control over life events, our teaching and learning, and our conceptions of morality. (p. 3)

As Belenky et al. (1997) illustrated, individuals' ways of viewing the world differ; these perspectives and experiences also vary across categories of difference like race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion. Therefore, theoretical assumptions should not be made based off generalizations of sameness across any categories of difference (Carter et al., 1996). Ospina and Foldy (2009) posited, culture shapes and informs how leadership is practice. By elevating the awareness of how WOC approach leadership, new approaches to leadership are offered that can prove useful in increasingly complex and diverse contexts.

Insufficient Leadership Paradigms and Prototypes for WOC

The leadership viewpoints of WOC in general, and WOC collegians specifically, are not widely available or recognized in dominant leadership studies literature. While these perspectives exist, and have existed throughout time, they have not been adequately centered. This exclusion and oversight is a disservice to all. The inadequate inclusion of WOC's perspective in leadership literature is due to the assumptions of race and gender neutrality in

leadership studies (Byrd, 2008; Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). In western culture, the meanings of leader and leadership have been fixed on White, middle-class men and more recently women, as the ideal prototype (i.e., example; Byrd, 2008; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker, 2001; Parker, 2005). Viewing leadership as a set of universal constructs, garnered from a select few and generalized to a great many, is not adequate to understanding the leadership experiences of WOC within dominant-culture environments (Parker, 2001). Several scholars have proclaimed that if the perspectives of WOC are never included in academic discourse, it renders their voice invisible (Carter et al., 1996; Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2014; Patton et al., 2015). The damage caused is a perpetuation of dominant viewpoints, a missed opportunity for society to experience WOC as creators and holders of knowledge, and the potential of WOC to internalize this lack of inclusion as a devaluation of their unique perspectives (Carter et al., 1996; Hughes, 1996; Williams, 2001).

Parker (2005) declared that it is a necessary imperative to envision a more inclusive image of leader to disrupt fixed images (i.e., prototypes). Parker (2005), along with several other critical leadership studies scholars, suggested that consideration be taken for how marginalized groups like WOC, who struggle against systems of racial and gender oppression, do not fit an idealized prototype of leader. They posited, WOC must negotiate new meanings of leader to engage in leadership in ways more congruent with their identities, values, and lived experiences (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

Generalized Leadership Research for Collegiate WOC

There is a paucity of research dedicated to examining the unique leadership experiences

of WOC collegians. Much of the leadership needs of WOC have been inferred from college student leadership literature on SOC or all women (Arminio et al., 2000; Baughman & Bruce, 2011; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Whitt, 1994). Although inferences can be made based off the research on college women and SOC, the needs of WOC collegians must be explored within the context of their unique standpoint and lived experiences. The few studies that have explored WOC collegians' leadership in college (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013) did not critically consider the socio-political location of WOC and how that impacts their experiences with leadership.

There are a select number of studies that take a critical approach when examining WOC collegians leadership experiences in college, however, these studies only look at minority women from a specific racial/ethnic group (Domingue, 2015). To incorporate the experiences of WOC in new thinking about leadership, we must understand how they view the world and make meaning of their realities. We must also be willing to examine the ways in which WOC have been systematically marginalized based on their social identities and recognize their silenced position within leadership literature and practice (Carter et al., 1996; Hughes, 1996; Parker, 2001; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). As higher education's diverse student demographic continues to increase, the manner taken to develop students and engage them in collegiate leadership experiences must be intentional, intersectional, and multifaceted (Arminio et al., 2000; Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, 2011; Owen, 2012; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

To address these deficits, Parker (2001) proposed that leadership be (re)conceptualized from a multicultural perspective, placing the perspectives of marginalized voices at the center of analysis. Niskodé-Dossett, Boney, Bullock, Cochran, and Kao (2011) asked, "How can we

stretch the paradigm for talking about WOC?” (p. 202). But I ask, how can we shift the paradigm to reflect the voices, perspectives, and honor the lived experiences of WOC? The concept of what leadership is, what leaders look like, and how leadership is practiced must become more dynamic. Sara Ahmed (2012) declared, “if the tendency when we are involved in the world is to look over what is around us, then the task of the phenomenologist is to attend to what is looked over, to allow what is “overed” to surface” (p. 22). This study sought to accomplish just that. To fill the gaps in the literature on college students’ experiences with leadership, this study centered the voices of WOC collegians and placed attention on their lived experiences to understand the phenomenon of leadership.

Purpose of the Study

It is not the intelligent woman v. the ignorant woman; nor the White woman v. the Black, the Brown, and the Red, it is not even the cause of woman v. man. Nay, tis woman’s strongest vindication for speaking that *the world needs to hear her voice*. (Cooper, 1988, p. xiv)

Anna Julia Cooper, notable Black woman novelist, first wrote these words in 1892 in her literary work, *A Voice from the South*. Cooper (1988) utilized these words to substantiate her position that no one else could speak for, or capture the essence of a Black woman’s experience like that of a Black woman. The emphasis placed on ‘the world needs to hear her voice,’ recognizes the importance of centering the perspectives and standpoint of WOC. Cooper (1988) reiterated that only when “the full range of the Black woman’s voice, with its own special timbres and shadings, remains mute no longer,” can the world fully see (p. xiv).

Although Cooper (1988) spoke of centering the voice of Black women, women from other racial and/or ethnic minority groups have also experienced marginalization, exclusion, and

have been silenced (Carter et al., 1996; Hughes, 1996). As a collective, WOC are underrepresented in the leadership scholarship, their needs are undervalued, and their experiences are overlooked (Carter et al., 1996; Hughes, 1996; Sulé, 2011). It is because of “the collective themes that Women of Color within and across race and ethnic boundaries encounter,” that this study examined all WOC collegians (Sulé, 2011, p.171). Specifically, WOC collegians who identified as Afro-Caribbean/ Black, Bi-racial, Asian American, and Latinx/Chicana comprised the participants of this study. Hughes (1996) proclaimed that it was time to listen to the voices of WOC collegians, to distinguish their differences and highlight the commonalities of their experiences. Hughes (1996) further noted, “we cannot wait until our numbers are less skewed; rather, we must build from our strengths. We must engage as women, interdependently and interethnically” (p. 481). It is in this spirit that the focus of this study was inspired. Elevating the voices and leadership experiences of WOC as a collective was at the heart of this exploration.

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership experiences of undergraduate WOC collegians attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) of higher education in the U. S. This study sought to better understand how leadership was learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians and discover how social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, informed this process. Given higher education’s regard as an ideal place for identity and leadership development (American Council on Education, 1937; Dugan, 2006; Selingo, 2013), possessing a greater understanding of how WOC collegians make meaning of their own social identities, and in turn, how that informs their understanding of leadership, is necessary to adequately develop this group.

Dugan (2011) asserted leadership be understood as both a learned behavior and a socially constructed phenomenon, informed by historical and systematic societal conditions of oppression. How WOC collegians construct their understanding of leadership informs how they enact leadership. Niskodé-Dossett et al. (2011) posited, “it is not enough to just bring Women of Color into the system; we need to challenge the system to incorporate support mechanisms for various aspects of a person’s identity” (p. 212). What is required is an adoption of frameworks and theories that help to understand and develop WOC collegians as they navigate systems of race, gender, and social class within the realm of higher education generally, and leadership opportunities specifically (Arminio, 1993; Byrd, 2008; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Howard-Hamilton, 2007).

Research Questions

To challenge the system, to support, and understand how WOC collegians navigate systems of oppression in college and within their leadership experiences, this study was grounded by feminism. Marine (2011) described feminist research as an approach that “seeks to locate the truths of women’s experiences in their own words and acts, and to use this truth to scrutinize the features of institutions that deter, or promote, women’s agency” (p. 17). To locate the truth of WOC collegians’ experiences, Critical race feminism (CRF), intersectionality, and positionality theory are used to examine, deconstruct, and accurately relay WOC collegians’ leadership experiences.

CRF is a theoretical framework that addresses racial and gender subordination from multiple angles (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). CRF recognizes that race, gender, and other salient social identities intersect and overlap and cannot be syphoned out individually from the

identity of WOC (Sulé. 2011). Intersectionality acknowledges the “multidimensionality” of the lived experiences of marginalized individuals (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Finally, positionality theory asserts that individuals have a social location that influences how their world is constructed (Kezar & Lester, 2010). Positionality theory acknowledges that identities are complex, fluid, contextually bound, and associated with power. Together, CRF, intersectionality, and positionality theory served as the conceptual framework to guide this study.

The following research questions guided this study:

Within the context of one’s multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?

- (a) What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians’ understanding/enactment of leadership?
- (b) How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?
- (c) What factors motivate WOC collegians to engage in leadership?

Overview of Methodology

A detailed explanation of the study’s methodology will be included in Chapter 3; however, a brief review is shared here. The methodological approach for this study is critical hermeneutic phenomenology. Phenomenology identifies the essence or core of an experience or phenomenon by evaluating an individual’s lived experience (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). A hermeneutic lens allows the researcher to explicate meaning of the lived experience that individuals may have difficulty articulating (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). A critical lens to phenomenology places emphasis on the social and political structures that shape lived

experiences and recognizes the importance of naming these structures as the essence is defined (Bourdieu, 2000; Melançon, 2014). This study intensely focused on centering the realities of WOC collegians to capture their unique understandings of and experiences with the phenomenon of leadership. Multiple forms of data were collected to capture a more holistic picture of WOC collegians experience with leadership at the intersection of their multiple social identities. For this study, a demographic survey, two interviews, and one vision board were utilized.

Significance of Study

This study is significant in that it fills the gap in literature on WOC collegians and leadership. As the literature in Chapter 2 will show, much of the research on WOC collegians has been inferred from the collective experiences of all SOC, or from all women (Arminio et al., 2000; Baughman & Bruce, 2011; Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Whitt, 1994). However, there is very scant literature that has examined leadership from the vantage point of WOC as a collective (i.e., including women from multiple racial and ethnic minority groups); illuminating the critical need for this study. This study also takes a nuanced approach to examining the experiences of college students with targeted social identities by employing three critical theoretical perspectives: CRF, intersectionality, and positionality theory—to better illuminate the lived experiences of WOC. Doing so reveals the interplay of their multiple and compounding social identities and interrogates the systematic influences that shape their experiences. Finally, this study sought to disrupt normative approaches to student identity and leadership development by illuminating the counter-narratives of WOC and offering forth a comprehensive description that reflects the essence and unique standpoint of WOC collegians as they engage with leadership. In research on leadership, the

perspectives and experiences of POC are often treated as the exception, rather than as “the potential source for theorizing from within a particularly important social context” (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 877). By centering the voice of WOC collegians on their experiences and understanding of leadership, they are positioned as a viable source to inform leadership theory and practice.

Core Concepts Defined

The following key terms provide useful framing in which to understand the population—WOC college students—and the phenomenon—leadership—being studied.

Identity. Defined as the sum of characteristics by which someone or something is definitively known or recognized (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). It is described as personal or behavioral traits that connect an individual to a social group (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). Identity is formed through personal choices, life experiences, socialization, and societal categorization; it is a lifelong process (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013; Tatum, 2013). Identity broadly defined can encompass a variety of characteristics like skillset (e.g., leader, athlete), occupation (e.g., doctor, CEO), social roles (e.g., mother/father).

Leadership as defined in current literature. Dominant leadership paradigms in Western culture define leadership as a process; it involves influence, can occur in groups or manifest individually, and involves common goals (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2013). It is “a localized, negotiated process of mutual influence that would theoretically accommodate multiple viewpoints and diverse situational challenges” (Parker, 2001, p. 44). This definition was not provided to participants nor used to interpret or frame their understandings of leadership. It is

provided for context to the reader to better understand dominant conceptualizations of leadership that this study sought to challenge, given the limited inclusion of the perspectives of WOC in leadership literature.

Leadership development. Leadership development involves continual engagement within a learning environment (e.g. college) to cultivate one's leadership abilities and efficacy. (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). It is "a continuous, systematic process designed to expand the capacities and awareness of individuals, groups, and organizations in an effort to meet shared goals and objectives" (Allen & Roberts, 2011, p. 67). This term helps to explicate the leadership engagement opportunities WOC collegians participate in while in college.

Social identity. Social identity is the term used to describe the social category (e.g., race, gender, religion, nationality, political affiliation) into which individuals fall, and to which they self-ascribe. It provides a definition of who one is in terms of the traits and defining characteristics of that category (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Tajfel, 1981). These group affiliations become a part of an individual's self-concept. Social identity provides nuance to the term identity, denoting the socially constructed categories that group individuals. For this study, the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and sex social identities were the foci.

Social location. Social location reflects the position of individuals as it relates to their historically and socially situated social identities (Hill-Collins, 2014; Levinson, 2011). Social location captures the relationship between identity, knowledge, and power (Levinson, 2011). When considered in tandem, these three facets illustrate an individual's unique position in society. Social location helps to better examine WOC collegians in the college context. Their

multiple intersecting social identities and ways of knowing, coupled with the college context and the power flowing through leadership spaces, mediates the leadership experiences of collegiate WOC.

Women of Color (WOC). WOC is a derivative of “People of Color (POC)” and is used to capture the voice of those who identify as a woman from a racial (e.g., African American/Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latin@, Native American, Multi-racial; defined by physiological characteristics like skin color, phenotype, and hair) and/or ethnic (e.g., defined by cultural factors like language, nationality, religion, and ancestry) minoritized group in the United States (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). The term has political underpinnings, used to express solidarity between and for groups that have been systematically marginalized because of minoritized social identities (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity; Patton et al., 2015; Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). Utilizing the term WOC or POC “allows for a more complex set of identities for the individual—a relational one that is in constant flux” (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008, p. 1038), serving as a term for individuals to better identify with multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and national origins.

There is research (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hayes, 2001; Patton et al., 2015), that highlights the risks in examining a ‘generic’ category of women, suggesting that doing so “renders invisible the process of differential racialization, through which groups of color have been and continue to be racialized to serve dominant White interests” (Patton et al., 2015, p. 38). However, literature has shown the value and importance of examining the collective experiences of WOC, in doing so, a common language is provided and solidarity is created within and across difference (Niskodé-Dossett et al., 2011; Vaccaro, 2011; Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). To participate in this study, a study criterion was that participants identify as a WOC. This term is used

throughout the entire study to represent the collective voices of collegiate women from racial and ethnic minoritized groups.

Per American Psychological Association (APA) style, race and ethnicity are capitalized. Women of Color, and any derivatives (e.g., Students of Color, People of Color, Communities of Color) are intentionally capitalized to reflect the collective racial and ethnic identities for which it is comprised.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to understand how the social identities of WOC collegians, and the compounding effects of those social identities, influenced how WOC collegians come to understand, experience, and enact leadership. This chapter provides a review of the literature pertaining to the key variables of interest for this study. The chapter opens with a review of the literature that explores the social construction of identity and its impact on the unique standpoint of WOC in U.S. society and higher education. The second section explores the developmental needs of WOC collegians, illuminating key social identity and cognitive development theories and models, and their role in the self-definition of WOC collegians. Next, the institutional context is reviewed to uncover its impact on the embodiment of WOC collegians' social identities in higher education. The fourth section examines college student leadership development, specifically how race and gender are situated within leadership development. From the gaps identified in the college student development and college student leadership literature, themes for the leadership development of WOC collegians are garnered. Finally, this chapter concludes with an overview of the conceptual framework that guided this study.

The Social Construction of Identity

Every person has a unique set of traits, behaviors, and abilities that sets them apart from one another. Coupled with personal traits, we all possess ascribed attributes that connect us to our beliefs, faith, family, community, and cultural heritage (Tatum, 2013). These ascribed

attributes allow us to be identified, associated with, or connected to others; significantly informing our identity (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013; Tatum, 2013). Identity is defined as the sum of characteristics by which someone or something is definitively known or recognized (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). It is also described as personal or behavioral traits that connect an individual to a social group (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). Identity is formed through personal choices, life experiences, socialization, and societal categorization; it is a lifelong process (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013; Tatum, 2013). It is because of these contributing aspects that identity is deemed socially constructed. Individuals come to understand and make meaning of their unique attributes in relation to others and how those attributes are perceived, received, and classified in society (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009).

Tatum (2013) suggested that the facets of identity that individuals most resonate with are those that capture the attention of others, and the self. These facets of identity are either considered normal (i.e., privileged/dominant) or “other” (i.e., different; p. 7). Within U. S. society, Tatum (2013) suggested there were at a minimum, seven social identity categories of “otherness:” race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, and age (p. 7). When WOC collegians are centered, added to this list of otherness are educational status, cultural identity, learning style/ability, and communication (e.g., verbal and nonverbal; Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996). These additional social identities of otherness speak to facets of WOC collegians’ identity that may stand out most, and be incongruent within the dominant culture of the higher educational environment.

Embedded within each of these social identities are subgroups that have dominant (i.e.,

systematically privileged by society) or subordinate or targeted (i.e., systematically underprivileged by society) statuses (Guido, 2011; Tatum, 2013). Because of privilege, dominant groups possess power and authority to define standards and set the parameters within which targeted groups operate. Dominant groups thus become the baseline, establishing normalcy for society. Using educational status as an example, being a first generation or non-traditional-age college student has a subordinate status in U.S. higher education. Many of the services, programs, and guidelines that are in place cater to students who are not first generation or who are traditional-age college students; making these students the referent group on which normalcy is set. An individual's entire lived experience is predicated on their social identity memberships and the privileges afforded, or not afforded to their membership groups. In the next sections, a review of social identity theory and the psychological processes that underpin identity formation are offered to gain a better understanding of identity construction and the implications for WOC.

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

The primary focus of SIT is to understand and explain how individuals come to define one's self and behave in terms of social (i.e., we) instead of personal (i.e., I) identities (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). SIT has its origins in the early work of Henri Tajfel, a Polish Jewish social psychologist, who was motivated by his own discrimination and intergroup conflict (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Hogg, 2006). Tajfel (1959, 1963, 1970) explored basic social cognitive processes and social belief aspects of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Through these scientific explorations, he introduced the concept of minimal group studies (i.e., minimal conditions sufficient to create in and out groups), which laid the foundation for the idea of social identity (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). Together with his

colleague John Turner, Tajfel crafted SIT, a theory of intergroup conflict (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). There are three main psychological processes of SIT, social categorization, social comparison, and social identification (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Hogg, 2006).

Social categorization. The process through which individuals are grouped, providing a means to organize socially relevant phenomena, is known as social categorization. Individuals are placed into like social groups or categories (e.g., race, gender, religion, nationality, political affiliation) when they are thought to share core defining group features that can separate them from others (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1978; Trepte, 2006). When social categorizations are shared by all group members, they serve as “social stereotypes” to help explain, understand, and at times justify behavior (Trepte, 2006, p. 257). Social categorizations produce and designate an individual’s location in society (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

WOC embody multiple social categories that designate their social location in society and shapes how others perceive them. For example, Latina women are often labeled as Hispanic, “a generic label that covers a multitude of geopolitical and cultural differences” (Hughes, 1996, p. 478). This broad social categorization establishes stereotypes about a large populous of people, neglecting to recognize the nuanced ethnic and cultural differences between Latina women. This generalization is also manifest in the higher education environment. Many Latina college students are met with stereotypes that their race and/or ethnic groups are not college ready or worthy, or that they as Latina women should be child bearers and homemakers (Hughes, 1996; Vaccaro, 2011). Latina collegians, like other WOC collegians, resisted and redefining the traits

assigned to their social groups to disrupt negative perceptions and find success in college (Vaccaro, 2011).

Social comparison. Social comparison is the result of social categorization. During this process, the attributes of a social category or group are appraised against one another (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Trepte, 2006). In doing so, members of these social groups are encouraged to prescribe behaviors that either fit, or challenge appraisals, to maintain in-group status and distinction from those not a part of the social group (Hoggs, Terry, & White, 1995). Through the process of social comparison, groups are valued as good or bad, determining the social position or perceived prestige of that group (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Trepte, 2006).

College is a prime environment in which social comparisons are perpetuated. Many WOC collegians find themselves negotiating elements of their identities to either fit in the college environment or challenge the status quo. For example, Muslim WOC collegians frequently negotiate whether to wear their hajibs (i.e., veil or head wrap) on campus; acknowledging that doing so could label them as different or ‘bad’ and keep them in the out-group (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). The constant appraisal of one’s social identities, often against dominant social identities (e.g., Christian-for the example above) and other minoritized identities, are functions of the hegemonic (i.e., dominant/ruling) system and readily occurs in the college environment.

Social identification. Social identification is defined as an individual’s awareness that they belong to a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). The social categories into which individuals fall, and to which they self-ascribe, coupled with the emotional significance attached to the membership, provide a definition

of who one is in terms of the traits and characteristics of that category (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Tajfel, 1981). These group affiliations become a part of an individual's self-concept. Each membership is represented in the individual's mind as a social identity that both describes and prescribes one's attributes as a member of that group; prescribing what one should think, feel, and behave (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). For example, Asian Americans college students are described as high-achieving with competitive academic success (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996). In addition to this intellectual characteristic, college women from a number of Asian cultures find themselves navigating cultural values that place them as secondary to men and expectations that they be docile and passive (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996; Sengupta & Upton, 2011). These external prescriptions can become internalized and inform one's self-definition as well as how they navigate the college environment. According to Luhtanen and Crocker (1992), social identity is a function of both self-evaluation and external evaluation of one's social group.

Collective self-esteem. With the desire to further examine the constructs outlined by SIT, Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) proposed an analysis of collective identity, synonymous to social identity, by developing the Collective Self-Esteem (CSE) scale. The CSE scale captured how individuals privately appraise their social groups (i.e., private CSE); how individuals believe others appraise their social groups (i.e., public CSE); the significance of social group membership in the definition of self (i.e., importance to identity); and how well an individual operates within one's social group (i.e., membership CSE; Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994). Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) CSE scale assesses an individual's social identity salience based on their membership in ascribed social categories such as race, gender,

religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class.

CSE is an important construct to consider as WOC collegians are explored. WOC self-ascribe to, and are affiliated with, their racial and/or ethnic social group (s) and their gender as women (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996; Sengupta & Upton, 2011). These facets of identity are negotiated at both the individual/private level and social/public level. Sengupta and Upton (2011) posited that WOC must negotiate their racial and gender identity development simultaneously while reconciling dominant views of their social group memberships. For example, a Black WOC collegian may believe she embodies ‘Black girl magic’ and appraise her Black womanhood as culturally affirming and supportive (private CRE & importance to identity). However, she may observe that like other Black students on campus, she faces marginalization, isolation, and is perceived as less academically talented (public CSE). How WOC navigate the development of their racial, ethnic, and gender identities informs the collective self-esteem they have for their salient identities.

Limitations

SIT. The original constructs of SIT were conceptualized in and framed by European culture. As such, utilizing this theory within the U.S. context requires modification to be both socially and culturally applicable. Given its compilation of broad ideas, capturing the “essence” of the theory, it is not easy to test or challenge SIT (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011, p. 393). SIT is considered a “grand theory,” it is multifaceted, complex, and subject to modification based off new insight on intrapersonal and intergroup relations (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011, p. 391). Thus, it is open to a variety of interpretation. For example, Hogg (2006) suggested that in any given situation, an individual only has one social identity “psychologically salient to govern self-

construal, social perception, and social conduct” (p. 115). This claim however, fails to consider how individuals like WOC, possess multiple social identities that are compounded, intersectional, and constantly operating in tandem with one another (Anzaldúa, 1990; Sengupta & Upton, 2011). WOC navigate situations, govern themselves, perceptions, and behavior within the context of this multiplicity.

For WOC collegians, the compounded nature of their social identities require that they develop and experience these identities simultaneously (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Sengupta & Upton, 2011). Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981) suggested that WOC embody multiple social identities that “intertwine so powerfully that they are irreducibly complex intersections” (p.277). This nuanced difference is important to honor as SIT is understood and applied to individuals with multiple marginalized social identities. Tajfel (1982) himself understood this nuance, acknowledging that the term *social identity*, could never completely attend to the complexities of identity development; as it is a phenomenon influenced by self-perception and social group membership and bound by context and time.

CSE scale. Due to its examination of a variety of ascribed social identities like race, gender, and ethnicity, the CSE scale measures a general tendency of positive collective identity. While useful, some scholars have illustrated the usefulness of examining a specific social group (see Ethier & Deaux, 1994). Findings from Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) revealed that collective self-esteem varied between races, however they did not have the language within the instrument to drill down further on this finding. As a result, Crocker et al., (1994) developed a race-specific CSE scale to attend to this limitation. Collective racial-esteem (CRE) is the resulting construct.

The tenants outlined in SIT and CSE offer useful insight into key elements that inform how WOC collegians define their self-concept in relation to collective identities, develop their multiple and intersecting ascribed social identities, and navigate society and higher education. CRE is further explored in a later section of the review to better understand racial identity development and leadership.

The Politics of Social Identity for WOC

Women of Color reside at the intersection of race and gender, affected by the politics and biases that separate People of Color (POC) from White people, and women from men (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996; Crenshaw, 1991). According to Ortiz (1994), this “relegates [WOC] to the lowest socioeconomic position in [U.S.] society” (p. 13). When the intersections of race meet the fluidity of gender identity and expression, the compounding effects of the identity politics for WOC magnify. In the fourth iteration of *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical Women of Color*, Moraga and Anzaldúa (2015) posited, “our understanding of how gender and ‘woman hood’ are defined has been challenged by young trans women and men of color’ (p. xvi). While much of the framing of the experiences of WOC have been through a cisgender heteronormative lens, it is important to name and honor this variance.

Zinn and Dill (1994) argued that WOC experience distinct subordination because of the embedded elements of hierarchy, domination, and marginalization based on one’s race, class, gender, and sexual orientation within the structures of U.S. society. This unique social location is at the heart of identity politics for WOC, both in society and in systems of higher education (Guy-Sheftall & Bell-Scott, 1989; Hill-Collins, 2014; Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa, & Lui, 2015; Sengupta & Upton, 2011; Zamani, 2003). Wiley (1994) defined the

politics of social identity as “the struggle over the qualities attributed, socially and institutionally, to individuals and groups of individuals” (p. 131). Identity politics can effectively expose the multiple oppressions pervasive in social and political structures, especially when these structures lack the ability to recognize the deep-rooted hierarchies that inform its existence (Downs, 1993).

Within U.S. American history, there has been constant struggle over the definition of, and value placed on social identities, specifically minority social identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Tatum, 2013; Wiley, 1994). Carter, Pearson, and Shavlik (1996) posited, there existed power in language; suggesting that even the use of the terms “minority” and “majority,” can affect the visibility of WOC when seeking to achieve cultural awareness (p. 463). Although socially constructed, social categories hold with them inherent power or lack of power; they have both meaning and consequence, and the values attributed to such categories create social hierarchies (Crenshaw, 1991). Though there is intrinsic inequity in social hierarchy, Crenshaw (1991) suggested that members of subordinated groups utilized their social identities as a site of resistance and empowerment, often finding ways to engage in meaningful identity politics. For example, proclamations like “I am Black” and “Black is beautiful,” are both statements of positive self-identification as well as statements of resistance against dominant notions of inferiority for one’s social group (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1297).

Matrix of domination. One of the purposes of identity politics is to uncover oppression throughout social and political structures (Downs, 1993). To capture the interconnection of systems of oppression, Patricia Hill-Collins (1990) engendered the concept of a matrix of domination. For WOC, race, class, and gender create a matrix of domination that is “experience[d] and resist[ed] on three levels, namely the level of personal biography, the group

level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender, and the systemic level of social institutions” (Hill-Collins, 1990, pp. 364-65). Instead of attempting to reflect marginalized social identities as additive, which would suggest that oppression can be quantified, the matrix of domination sheds insight into the commonalities in the sources of inequality (e.g., economic, political, and ideological structures), in turn, offering a clearer understanding on how to address and absolve these inequalities (Hill-Collins, 1990; Ore, 2013).

WOC collegians & the matrix. When WOC collegians are examined within the matrix of domination, a more nuanced understanding of their positionality in college is offered. W.E.B. DuBois (1903/1994) exemplified this uniqueness when he articulated:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels [her] two-ness . . . two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings . . . this longing to attain self-conscious [womanhood], to merge [her] double self into a better and truer self. In this merging [she] wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. (p. 2)

The two-ness, as captured by DuBois (1903/1994), personifies many facets of identity for WOC collegians; as a woman and a Person of Color, of the desire to define one’s self while in an environment (e.g., college) designed to both trouble and catalyze development, and it speaks to the reality that their ‘irreducibly complex’ social identities are a site of both joy and challenge.

Outsider within. The unique social location of WOC collegians allows them to embody an “outsider-within” status (Hill-Collins, 1986, p. S14). Hill-Collins (1986) described the outsider-within status as a unique “standpoint on self, family, and society for [WOC],” noting that such a status positioned WOC to have both a “nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference” (p. S15). Sengupta and Upton (2011) speculated that while WOC collegians are

navigating multiple facets of their development at the intersection of their race and gender, they also employ strategies to help them survive and navigate the college environment. In her work on Latina women, Anzaldúa (1990), described this as having to “change faces,” to become less vulnerable to oppression and marginalization (p. xv). The literature has suggested that racialized and gendered perceptions of self, others, and the institutional atmosphere, can affect how WOC collegians engage socially and academically (Miles, Bertrand Jones, Clemons, & Golay, 2011; Winkle-Wagner, 2009).

Construction of self. WOC collegians find themselves navigating their racial and gender identities as they work to define themselves as independent beings (Sengupta & Upton, 2011). Miles et al. (2011) described self-definition as a multifaceted concept that informs how an individual sees themselves in relation to others, through the lenses of their race, gender, cognitive ability, and other facets of identity. Miles et al. (2011) suggested that the college environment greatly informs how WOC defined themselves; with self-definition contributing to the overall success of these women in college. To garner insight into how WOC engage in self-definition and the institutional impact on self-concept, Miles et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study framed by critical race feminism, to center the voices of six Black female students at a PWI in the south. Utilizing focus groups as a data collection method, Miles et al. (2011) examined participants’ experiences with student support services on campus and revealed how the intersections of participants’ racial, ethnic, and gender social identities influenced those experiences. Miles et al. (2011) posited that as individuals navigate the creation of self, they form perceptions of themselves based on these relationships, ultimately shaping an individual’s personality. For WOC, self-perception is not only shaped by family, friends, and other social

interactions, but also by a history of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination and marginalization shown to WOC throughout society and the higher education environment (Miles et al., 2011; Sengupta & Upton, 2011).

Scholars have also suggested that race and ethnicity are crucial variables in the development of self-worth and positive identity construction (Gurin, Hurtado, & Peng, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tatum, 1992). These studies validate the importance of intentional self-definition for WOC collegians. As posited by Patricia Hill-Collins (2014), “self-definition and self-valuation are not luxuries—they are necessary for [WOC] survival” (p. 310). WOC collegians’ establishment of self, and valuing one’s standpoint amid being labeled as “other,” is an essential way to challenge systems of domination, systems that are very present in the U.S. educational system (Hill-Collins, 2014, p. 310).

The literature summarized above provided useful insight into the unique role social identity plays in U.S. society, and the implications social identity politics have for WOC within and outside the academy. Given this framing, a more critical examination of college student development and the leadership development of WOC collegians is taken in the following sections.

The Development of WOC in College

College is a significant time for growth and development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). Scholars have approached their exploration and understanding of this growth by examining several facets of development. There are three from which a considerable amount of literature on college student development stem: psychosocial, cognitive, and identity development (Evans et al., 2009). Unfortunately, a considerable amount of research and practice

examining these domains have typically represented students as “a homogenous group with similar needs, goals, and experiences” (Pope, Miklitsch, & Weigand, 2005, p. 51).

Undergraduate WOC collegians, the focus of this exploration, are the antithesis of homogeny. They come to college with very diverse needs, varying goals, and nuanced lived experiences.

WOC collegians possess multiple identities, inclusive of but not limited to, race, gender, and ethnicity; identities that have been historically and systematically marginalized in society and the educational environment (Patton et al., 2015; Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). Considering this unique standpoint, many facets of development overlap for WOC collegians compounding their developmental journey (Abes, 2009; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Evans et al., 2009; Sengupta & Upton, 2011). However, the literature is replete with examples of how women and POC continue to be interpreted on and bound by developmental theories and models that were not designed with their unique social identities in mind (Arminio, 1993; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Howard-Hamilton, 2007).

Pope (2000) proclaimed over 15 years ago that there was almost no research on the unique development of Students of Color (SOC) in college. This disparity seems to prevail when WOC are the center of exploration. What little research that exists tends to situate itself on a subgroup of WOC students (e.g., Black and Latino women, see Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Miles et al., 2011; Rosales & Persons, 2003; Torres, 2003; Winkle-Wagner, 2009) or lumps WOC students within the conversation on the development of all college SOC or all college women (see Evans et al., 2009; Pope et al., 2005). Herein lies the challenge and ultimately the difficulty in understanding and meeting the developmental needs of all college students.

In the next sections, a review of the student development literature on social identity and

cognitive development domains is offered. Specific focus is placed on illuminating racial, ethnic, and gender identity development, as these facets are central to understanding WOC collegians' visibly categorizable social identities. WOC collegians are often faced with the task of representing their race and their gender, met with the expectation that they should, or even can, choose between the two (Chowhary, 1997). This complexity warrants a nuanced understanding of social identity development.

Social Identity Development

Social identity development is considered the process by which individuals recognize and gain a greater understanding of their identities; learning how these social identities influence other facets of their lives (McEwen, 2003). Social identity development focuses on the complexities of socially constructed identities like race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, spirituality, and religion and their impact on personal and social development (Evans et al., 2009). There is a considerable amount of research that explores social identity development. However, many of these studies examine social identity development individually (e.g., race, or gender, or ethnicity, or sexual orientation). Because WOC collegians experience higher education at the intersection of their multiple social identities, understanding the interconnection of social identities is necessary.

Racial identity. Helms (1993) defined racial identity as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that [they] share a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (p. 3). Helms and Piper (1994) suggested racial identity theories offer insight into how college students view themselves and others who share and do not share their racial group membership. Pope (2000) posited that racial identity models explore an individual’s sense of

belonging to a particular racial group and how that membership informs their thoughts, perceptions, and outlook on life. Kim (2012) suggested racial identity development captures how individuals deal with the impact of racism and their evolution of self. Through this lens of racial awareness, Helms (1995) posited that individuals reach racial identity maturation when they can acknowledge and name racism as an external systemic construct rather than internalizing it as a deficiency in one's self. According to Vaccaro (2011), racial identity development occurs in everyone, however, the developmental journey looks different for POC and White people due to "differing access to power and privilege" (p.107).

There are several theorists who have offered forth theories and models to understand various racial groups' identity development. Examples of these include: Helms' (1995) model of identity development for POC and White people; Cross's (1971) Nigrescence model to understand Black identity development; Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) model of Latino Identity Development; Kim's (2012) Asian American identity development model; and Renn's (2003, 2004) ecological theory of mixed race identity development. Key limitations to many racial identity development theories and models are that they tend to have a singular and essentialized focus, and approach development in a stepwise, linear progression. This approach implies that identities are static and unidirectional, failing to consider the fluidity of identity within its social context (Holvino, 2012; Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Collective racial esteem (CRE). Although distinct from racial identity development, CRE parallels elements of racial identity, going beyond group membership to provide a more nuanced understanding of an individual's racial identity (Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012). CRE is a narrowly defined extension of collective self-esteem (Dugan, et al., 2012; Luhtanen & Crocker

1992). Like collective self-esteem, CRE captures four aspects of an individual's self-concept as it relates to their racial group membership (Crocker et al., 1994). These four categories focus on an individual's self-appraisal of value of their racial group (i.e., Private CRE), an individual's beliefs about how others value their racial group (Public CRE), how central one's racial group membership is to self-definition (identity salience), and how well individuals believe they fit as members in their racial group (i.e., membership affiliation; Dugan et al., 2012). The targeted emphasis of CRE allows for a better understanding of the relationship between racial identity development and individual self-definition relative to one's racial group membership.

Ethnic identity. Although often interchanged with racial identity, ethnic identity captures the constructs of one's culture that illuminate uniqueness, difference, and collective experience (Cokley, 2007; Phinney, 1995). There is no one absolute definition of ethnicity, however, some shared understandings include cultural factors like language, nationality, religion, and ancestry to which individual and group identity meanings are affiliated (Cokley, 2007; Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). Phinney (1995), a leading scholar in ethnic identity development, described ethnic identity as a multifaceted variable that embodied feelings, attitudes, awareness, and behaviors about one's ethnicity. Ethnic identity is categorized into multiple components: internal ethnic identity and external ethnic identity (Evans et al., 2009). It can be examined by the degree to which an individual acculturates (i.e., change one's beliefs, behaviors, and values) to the White dominant culture or the degree to which individuals preserve their ethnic ties (Evans et al., 2009).

Phinney (1996) distinguished ethnic identity development models from racial identity development models by noting, racial identity models focus on subordinated groups' understanding of and reaction to racial oppression by dominant groups, while ethnic identity

models describe the acquisition and sustainability of cultural traits. Phinney (1990) created an ethnic identity development model that illustrated ethnic development for multiple ethnic groups. Her model consisted of three-stages of ethnic identity formation: unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search/moratorium, and ethnic identity achievement (Phinney, 1990).

Evans et al. (2009) addressed the limited range of ethnic identity development research for college students, noting that much of the research focuses on Latin@ and Asian Americans with limited exploration on Black and American Indian students' ethnic identities. In addition to this limited research, more nuanced approaches are needed to examine the multiplicity of difference within ethnic groups. Finally, more research on how ethnic identity intersects with other facets of social identity are critical (Evans et al., 2009; McCall, 2005). This last acknowledgement is especially important when exploring the irreducibly complex intersections of social identity development for WOC collegians. The next sections review other aspects of identity development essential for WOC collegians, specifically gender identity and multiple dimensions of identity.

Gender identity. Gender reflects the social and cultural prescribed traits between sexed individuals (i.e., male, female; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Evans et al., 2009). Gender has historically been understood, researched, and expressed on a binary system, either 'woman' or 'man' (Evans et al., 2009; Lev, 2004). More critical and nuanced research on gender examined gender as fluid, with individuals expressing gender and roles on a continuum (Butler, 1990; Lev, 2004). Within this continuum, individuals may possess gender identities that include, but are not limited to cisgender (stereotypical gender roles align with biological sex) and transgender (stereotypical gender roles lack congruence with biological sex; Evans et al., 2009; Hart &

Lester, 2011). Aligning the self with the roles, expectations, and behaviors of one's biological sex and socialized gender reflect gender expression (Butler, 1990).

There is considerable research that supports the notion that traditional gender roles and norms continue to impact and inform the lives of college students (Evans et al., 2009). College women are often met with gendered expectations of how they should interact in academic and social spaces (Sax, 2008; Zamani, 2003;). The literature has shown that women often self-select, and at times are expected to take on more helper roles in student organizations, be more nurturing and supportive, and less vocal or assertive (Domingue, 2015; Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013). For WOC collegians, gender roles and norms are compounded by their racial and ethnic identities; for example, Latina college women are expected to still support their families while being a college student (Sengupta & Upton, 2011). Types and levels of engagement, academic majors, self-concepts, and inter-personal interactions are all subject to gender-specific prescribed standards (Bem, 1981; Evans et al., 2009; Steele, 1997). Evans et al. (2009) postulated that there was no leading model of gender identity development as it pertains to college students. Although dissonance exists, theorists have sought to understand the gender identity development of college students. Gender identity development starts early in adolescence and is assumed to be a significant part of an individual's self-concept well before entering college (Evans et al., 2009).

Bem's gender schema. Recognizing that gender identity development commences before college, Bem (1981) conceptualized a gender schema theory that looked at gender identity from the perspective of the individual, and the role that individual's environment has on self-definition, sex differences, and socially constructed roles and expectations. Bem's (1981) gender

schema theory suggested students come to institutions of higher education with predetermined frameworks of how to ‘perform’ gender; whether that is through their interpersonal interactions, the majors they select, or the way they ‘show up.’ While Bem’s (1981) gender schema theory accounts for environmental influences, it does not consider how the historic and systematic marginalization of WOC and their socially imposed status of “other,” may influence how their gender schema is crafted. Brown (1998) posited, “girls are either initiated into or, with the support of their families and communities, encouraged to actively resist the dominant social construction of reality” (p. 18). These socially constructed realities can inform how WOC learn to perform gender, ultimately crafting their gender schema.

Social cognitive theory of gender development. Addressing gender schema’s limitation of failing to consider an individual’s social category/status when examining gender identity development, a social cognitive theory of gender development is offered. Social cognitive theory views gender development, gender concepts, roles, and behaviors, as the by-product of a larger system of social influences, experienced at the familial, peer, educational, and societal levels (Bandura & Bussey, 2004; Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Unlike gender schema theories, a social cognitive theory of gender development places significant attention on the mechanisms that inform gender-related ideas and how those ideas are translated into gender-related behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Bussey and Bandura (1999) acknowledged the significance of gender identity development, noting that some of the most important elements of a person’s core self, from what they are passionate about, to how they choose to engage in the world, are heavily informed by gender roles that are crafted within one’s social environment. They suggested, much of what is

defined as gender-roles and expression, come more from “cultural design than from biological endowment” (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 676). Viewing gender through a social cognitive lens allows for a more nuanced examination of how WOC negotiate and define their gender identity within the context of other salient identities and the environment. If gender roles are constructed in the context of one’s environment, the socio-political location of WOC, indicative of racial, ethnic, and gender oppression, greatly informs how they develop their gender identity. This is crucial to unpacking how WOC experience the college environment and ultimately how they define themselves.

Gender reconsidered. There is extensive discussion, especially in existentialism and postmodern feminism scholarship, of the differentiation between gender and sex, gender roles and expression, and how these all converge to shape an individual’s gender identity (Butler, 1990; de Beauvoir, 1974; Tong, 2014). Postmodern feminist Judith Butler’s (1990) influential work, *Gender Trouble*, challenged the normalized notion that gender, sex, and sexuality were interwoven and complementary (Tong, 2014). Postmodern feminism acknowledges that there are “multiple truths, multiple roles, and multiple realities . . . [this perspective is] open to a multiplicity of identities, lived experiences, and definitions of gender roles” (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011, p. 11). Butler posited that there really is no connection between an individual’s sex and their gender; agreeing with existentialist philosopher and feminist Simone de Beauvoir’s notion that, “one is not born a woman; one becomes a woman” (Tong, 2014, p. 201). For Butler and de Beauvoir, along with most feminists, gender is constructed. Through this lens, scholars believe that how gender is performed is subjective and contextually based and should not be normalized.

A postmodern feminist perspective resists binary thinking and seeks to achieve unity as human beings; to cease excluding, ostracizing, and alienating those for whom are labeled “abnormal, deviant, and marginal people” (Tong, 2014, p. 208). Instead of adopting a heteronormative view on gender, which embraces a man / woman binary, Butler (2004) advocated for a performative construction of gender. She argued that gender should not be understood as a role that illuminates or hides the core self, but that gender be viewed as an ‘act,’ as individuals are socialized to perform these gendered scripts.

Butler’s (2004) advocacy to view gender in a non-heteronormative, binary manner, allows the voices of queer, transgender, and gender nonconforming individuals to be centered. When bodies exist outside of the traditional gender binary, how we understand gender identity development must become more complex (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; D’Augelli, 1994). Yet, the real limitations of such forward thinking by postmodern feminist is that gender “functions as a difference that makes a difference” (di Stefano, 1990, as cited in Tong, 2014) and unfortunately there is no way to avoid the “categorical violence” of naming ‘women’ or ‘men’ (Tong, 2014, p. 209). Several queer, feminist, and postmodern scholars have highlighted the oppressiveness of heteronormativity and gender, namely its ignorance to the existence of fluid gender identities and expressions (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Borstein, 1994; Butler, 2004; Nestle, Howell, & Wilchins, 2002).

While the script (i.e., gender) can be tweaked by the actors, the script still exists. Butler (1993) acknowledged that even though sex and gender are constructed phenomena, because of societal influence, many individuals lack the agency needed to construct their own definitions of gender and sex (Tong, 2014). This social reality acknowledges that along with a shift in how

gender is considered, a shift in language and society's essentialized notion of a man-woman dichotomy must be reconsidered. Butler posited that challenging social norms on gender and sex required significant imagination and resilience (Tong, 2014). Because gender is an important facet of identity for WOC collegians, a better understanding of how WOC are socialized by gender and how they ultimately express it, provides useful framing to understand their experiences in college.

Zinn and Dill (1994) posited, “for African American women, Latinas, Asian American women, and Native American women, gender is part of a larger pattern of unequal social relations; how gender is experienced depends on how it intersects with other inequalities” (p. 3). The review of literature on gender identity development affirmed this reality. An exploration of multiple dimensions of identity in the next section will explore this multiplicity of social identity development further.

Multiple dimensions of identity. Within the last decade, student development scholars have begun exploring how to approach identity development in more critical and nuanced ways. Of interest for this discussion on WOC collegians is the work of Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007), and their reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity (RMMDI). Extending the work of Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity, the RMMDI encompasses cylindrical rings that intersect to represent an individual's self-perception of multiple identity dimensions (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation), orbiting around a core which is to reflect an individual's core self (Abes et al., 2007). The RMMDI also incorporates meaning making and contextual influences (e.g., family, friends, social norms, values, stereotypes, sociopolitical locations; Abes et al., 2007).

Abes et al. (2007) posited that depending on the context and the meaning-making filter of the person, a dimension of identity may be closer to the core self, or further away. Although the RMMDI is framed with an intersectional perspective, by considering multiple facets of development like cognition and identity while accounting for contextual factors, it does not capture the intersectionality of social identities but rather, the multiplicity and salience of identity (Jones, 2009). Holvino (2012) highlighted this concern with her observations of the model of multiple dimensions of identity, for which the RMMDI is an extension. She posited, “intersecting circles [do] not adequately represent the fluidity of identities, its multiplicity, and the constantly changing process of ‘identities’” (Holvino, 2012, p. 171).

This is where the RMMDI departs from fully understanding the compounding effects of social identities. Abes et al. (2007) framed their conceptualization of multiple dimensions of identity by how social identities are in relationship with one another, suggesting that these relationships can be created and dismantled depending on the situation. However, this approach fails to consider how individuals with marginalized social identities, like WOC, experience life intersectionally; facets of themselves cannot be reduced or syphoned out based on ‘how they are feeling’ or ‘how they were raised’ (Sulé, 2011). A multiplistic approach to social identity takes an additive approach (e.g., Latina + lesbian + woman), where as an intersectional approach honors the collective (e.g., Latina lesbian woman). As Audre Lorde (1984a) proclaimed, one’s social identities reflects the whole person and is not merely an addition of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Wijeyesinghe (2012) confirmed this through her examination of individuals with multiracial identities as she posited, a core component of intersectionality is that

“individuals do not experience identity and the world through various components of themselves, taken individually and separately,” but collectively and synergistically (p. 84).

The innovative approach taken by Abes et al. (2007) to capture the holistic development of college students, considering new theoretical frameworks like feminism and queer theory to take an intersectional approach to student development, is novel. However, caution should be taken to avoid conflation of multiplicity and intersectionality when examining the social identity development of WOC collegians. More and more scholars are acknowledging the distinctions between multiplicity and intersectional of social identities. As a result, there has been an increased application of critical frameworks and epistemologies to more deeply understand identity development (Jones, Abes, & Baxter Magolda, 2013). Critical frameworks like intersectionality, critical race theory, and queer theory have recently been used to unpack identity development in various social and political contexts and intersections. For example, interlocking systems of oppression and social location (see Hulko, 2009), systems of inequality and racism (see Jones, Abes, & Baxter Magolda w/ Quaye, & Kasch, 2013), heteronormativity and gender identity development (see Renn & Bilodeau, 2005), faith and spirituality (see Stewart, 2002, 2008).

Cognitive Identity Development

Cognitive identity development is the last developmental domain being reviewed to understand how WOC collegians’ construct their self-concept. This facet of development provides insightful foundational information to guide the examination of WOC collegians’ experiences in college and engagement with leadership. Finding its origins in the work of Piaget (1952), cognitive development theories focus on understanding the thought processes of

individuals and how they make meaning of the world around them (Evans et al., 2009). These theories examine a student's reasoning process: intellectual, moral, and judgement (Evans et al., 2009). Although limited in quantity, there is a growing body of literature that examines the cognitive development of WOC collegians.

Intellectual reasoning. One facet of cognitive development is intellectual reasoning (i.e., growing one's knowledge base academically or socially; Evans et al., 2009). For SOC, intellectual growth is predicated on being viewed as holders and creators of knowledge (Bernal, 2002). For SOC, there is frequent concern of what is considered "valid knowledge" within academic and social environments (Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Specifically, SOC desire to have their lived experiences, culture, and histories included, understood, and accurately interpreted; as it is critical for their cognitive growth (Bernal, 2002). This importance is compounded for WOC collegians. Brown and Gilligan (1992) postulated that for women, having the ability to give and receive knowledge, was an important factor in their self-concept and efficacy.

Environmental and social interactions. Cognitive identity development is shaped by one's context and environment. Piaget (1952) emphasized the importance of the environment and how social interactions with others greatly informs cognitive growth. Several scholars have articulated the positive effects of peer group interactions on cognitive development (Astin, 1993; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella et al., 1997). However, these studies did not examine how race and ethnicity within social interactions, could illuminate different cognitive development outcomes. Taking up this charge, Martinez Alemán (2000) conducted a feminist qualitative study of 41 undergraduate WOC collegians (i.e., African American/Black, Latina, and Asian American) attending a small liberal arts PWI. Through questionnaires and semi-structured

interviews, Martinez Alemán (2000) discovered peer interactions for WOC, especially with other WOC, yielded cognitive outcomes of critical thinking, understanding, and comprehension. The WOC in Martinez Alemán's (2000) study revealed that their friendships with other WOC served as an outlet to reconcile positive and negative internalized feelings about their racial and/or ethnic group memberships; which is especially important for WOC collegians attending institutions where the climate may be unwelcoming. These peer interactions positively informed WOC's self-esteem and provided the necessary space to shape, disrupt, defy, and strengthen their own self-concepts (Martinez Alemán, 2000).

Culturally-focused spaces. WOC collegians benefit from safe and affirming spaces that reflect their cultural backgrounds. These spaces are instrumental in lessening feelings of marginalization, isolation, and alienation often experienced when being underrepresented on campus (Quaye et al., 2015). Sometimes referred to as ethnic enclaves (Murguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991) or minority student subcultures (Landry, 2002), scholars agreed these spaces are vital for SOC's engagement and matriculation through college. These spaces allow the voices and lived experiences of WOC to be centered. The 'counter-spaces' created through culturally specific organizations and clubs provide WOC collegians a place to engage in safe honest dialogue and receive affirmation of their counter-narratives by others who share in the struggle. WOC collegians must be understood psychologically, socially, and culturally to adequately address their needs and positively shape their experiences.

Mentoring relationships. While not expansive, there has been a viable amount of scholarship that speaks to the impact mentoring relationship have on WOC in college. According to Margolis and Romero (2001), the term mentor has come to mean "a trusted guide and advisor

to the young” (p. 80). Mentorship encourages positive self-definition for WOC collegians, affirms that they can be authorities of knowledge, provides a sense of belonging, and increases their likelihood to pursue areas of study they may not have considered on their own, had they not received support and encouragement from a mentor (Ong et al., 2011; Ortega et al., 2013; Patton & Harper, 2003; Tate & Linn, 2005). Several scholars have strongly stressed the importance of WOC having role models and mentors that reflect their identities (Hughes, 1996; Miles et al., 2011; Patton & Harper, 2003; Tidball et al., 1999; Wolf-Wendel, 2000). When there is a critical mass of WOC learning and growing together, not only are mentoring relationships forged, a community is created that can collectively dismantle gender norms and hegemony, and stand in solidarity for one another as they navigate the world around them.

Women’s ways of knowing. How an individual comes to understand the world, define one’s self, and interact with those around them, is greatly informed by the context of their lived experiences. For WOC, this context manifests at the intersection of their social identities and informs how they make meaning of their realities. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule’s (1986) developed a cognitive theoretical approach known as Women’s Ways of Knowing (WWK) to understand cognitive development from a gendered perspective. Utilizing a qualitative study design, Belenky et al. (1986) interviewed 135 women from varying ethnic backgrounds, social classes, and educational statuses. The college age women in their study were from six different undergraduate institutions, and were included to gauge how institutions of higher education support or hinder women’s ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986).

Belenky et al. (1986) described five epistemological perspectives (i.e., silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge) to capture

how women made meaning of their lives and how they came to understand truth, knowledge, and authority. This theory is used by student affairs educators to understand how women students develop intellectually and make meaning of the experiences they have in college (Evans et al., 2009). Belenky et al. (1986) discovered that for women, “the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined” (p. 18). Belenky et al. (1986) were concerned with exploring “how women know what they know,” and why women frequently doubted their intellectual competence (p. 8). Belenky et al. (1986) believed that what women considered to be truth and reality, informed their perception of the world around them.

Through this lens, Belenky et al. (1986) privileged the voice and lived experiences of women. However, what this theory does not privilege is the race and ethnicity of women, and how those social identities also inform ‘meaning making.’ Although Belenky et al.’s (1986) qualitative study claimed to have a representative sample of women from diverse ages, class backgrounds, and walks of life, they do not explicitly reveal the social identity breakdowns of the 135 participants. While seemingly insignificant, Banks-Wallace (2000) proposed that race, ethnicity, and class significantly influence people’s ways of knowing. Without clear insight into the make-up of the sample, the application of WWK to understand the unique cognitive development of WOC collegians, poses limitations.

Learning and intellectual growth emerge from the experiences WOC have at the intersection of marginalization and oppression of their multiple and intersecting social identities (Bernal, 2002; Berry, 2010; Sulé, 2011). This context profoundly informs the construction and validation of knowledge (Banks-Wallace, 2000). A more nuanced understanding of cognitive identity development can explain why WOC collegians have challenges navigating academic

spaces, and finding voice in classrooms where there are no other faces and voices that share their experiences. This speaks to the significant role institutional context plays in shaping the experiences and development of students.

The review of literature on the social identity and cognitive development needs of WOC collegians revealed some important take-a-ways. First, there is just not enough research examining student development from the perspective of WOC collegians. Although inferences can be made based off the research on women and SOC, the needs of WOC collegians must be explored within the context of their unique standpoint and lived experiences. Failing to do so, approaches development in a very essentialized manner, an inadequate approach to meet the needs of WOC collegians. After examining the literature on social identity development, it is evident more intersectional understandings and applications of social identity development are necessary for individuals with multiple and socially compounding social identities. Even more, how these social identities are defined and experienced contextually has direct implications for development. Acknowledgments like gender fluidity and the role race and ethnicity development play in cognitive reasoning, are crucial for understanding the experiences and realities of WOC collegians.

Institutional Context and the Embodiment of WOC Collegians' Identity

Student development does not occur in a vacuum. One of the greatest take-a-ways from the review of literature on the social and cognitive identity development of WOC collegians is—‘context matters.’ Every facet of the college experience, both on and off campus, has direct implications for how students grow and excel. Astin (1993) declared, institutions of higher education had an obligation to provide the ideal environment necessary to maximize student

engagement. Astin (1993) further posited that when an institution's services and initiatives are receptive to the needs and challenges of the student, the institution displays a commitment to student success. Even more, when those services and initiatives meet the needs of a diverse group of students, it positively informs their college experience (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993).

Students come to college with diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences; armed with distinctly different perceptions of their talents, abilities, self-concepts, and goals (Sax, 2008). Kunkel (1994) posited, "women's needs on college campuses are unique and different from men's needs because of this country's historical tradition of ignoring, excluding, and trivializing women and treating them as less productive, less rational, and less serious than men" (p. 16). Even when the opportunities provided to women and men are the same, stereotypical gender norms, roles, and expectations prevail, markedly effecting their experiences in college (Sax, 2008). As the institutional environment is examined, it is important to acknowledge these nuanced differences. Within the context of WOC collegians' unique social location and development constructs shared in the previous section, an exploration of the literature on various institutional contexts is reviewed. Specifically, institutional culture and institutional climate are examined to garner themes that are relevant to understanding how these contexts support or hinder the development of WOC collegians.

Institutional Culture

A considerable amount of time and research has been spent examining institutional climate, specifically racial and gender climate, and its effect on the experiences and outcomes of SOC (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus & Harris, 2010; Quaye, Griffin, & Museus, 2015). However, there has been limited exploration on the role institutional

culture plays in shaping these experiences and outcomes. Institutional culture is defined as the deeply rooted norms, assumptions, values, and beliefs that guide and shape institutional practice and behavior (Museus & Harris, 2010; Quaye et al., 2015). Kuh and Whitt (1988) coined this phenomenon as the “invisible tapestry” of an institution, providing the framework “within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus” (p. 1). The current outcry from SOC on many of the predominately White institutions of higher education in the United States is a byproduct of an unwelcoming climate, and even greater, it is a result of systematic discriminatory practices that are embedded in the very fabric of the institution; this is institutional culture.

Whereas institutional climate centers the perceptions of specific parts of an organization, institutional culture is the sum of its parts, embodying all aspects of the organization. Because of its complex nature and firm roots, institutional culture is often less pliable than institutional climate (Museus & Harris, 2010; Quaye et al., 2015). This seemingly fixed status makes examining and even changing institutional culture quite challenging; but, it is a necessary charge to pursue to effect meaningful change. The experiences of WOC in college must be understood in the context of the institutional culture in which they navigate daily. Understanding how culture shapes climate and in turn the experiences of WOC, is paramount to understanding their development while in college.

Structural diversity. Research has revealed that institutions have focused on increasing the representation of students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds (i.e., structural diversity), in an effort to become more diverse and inclusive, and promote racial and ethnic equity on campus (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, &

Gurin, 2002). There has been research that speaks to the benefits of a more structurally diverse campus, suggesting that it can have positive effects on student outcomes. Specifically, scholars suggested a structurally diverse campus can promote increased interaction among diverse groups of people, increase the likelihood for positive socio-cultural conversations, and enhance critical thinking and cognitive growth (Antonio, 2001; Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates, 2013; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999; Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella, Palmer, Moye, & Pierson, 2001). Additional research also suggests having a higher percentage of students from diverse groups positively impacts how SOC perceive themselves and are perceived by others, and contributes to their sense of belonging (Tidball, 1983; Wolf-Wendell, 2000).

Although these are desirable outcomes, research has shown that merely increasing the representation of individuals from racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds does not guarantee meaningful cross-cultural interactions (Engberg & Hurtado, 2011; Gurin et al., 2002). Nor does structural diversity evoke an automatic change in institutional culture, policy, and practice to insure individuals who are racially and ethnically diverse feel welcomed, included, and supported (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Museus & Harris, 2010; Quaye et al., 2015). Howard-Hamilton (2003) posited that a “melting pot view of diversity” cannot assist all students, particularly WOC, to feel a sense of belonging and security within the campus environment (p. 20). What WOC collegians truly benefit from is a campus with a critical mass of other WOC and SOC at all levels (i.e., student, faculty, staff; Wolf-Wendell, 2000). A critical mass is achieved when institutions of higher education successfully recruit and retain POC, remains attentive to the needs of SOC, and fosters a supportive campus climate where SOC can

establish social and cultural networks to satisfy their academic, social, and cultural needs (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Gardener, 1989).

Institutional Climate

A natural by-product of institutional culture, institutional climate is the “current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (Bauer, 1998, p. 2). Peterson and Spencer (1990) described this as the atmosphere or vibe of an organization. Because climate centers perceptions, attitudes, and expectations, it is influenced by external forces and more likely to fluctuate, unlike institutional culture (Bauer, 1998). Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003) suggested campus climate mediates college students’ academic and social experiences. Pope et al. (2005) posited that institutional climate impacts students’ identity development, and informs how they manage interpersonal relationships, experience cultural differences, and navigate the college environment. Though the conversation on institutional climate has been expansive, the experiences and needs of WOC have not been centered. These next sections explore the campus climate, inclusive of academic and social climate, to reveal how to address the developmental needs of WOC while in college.

Social climate. Often described as ‘chilly,’ the campus climate WOC experience frequently consists of social isolation, lack of supportive relationships, racism, sexism, and discrimination (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Patton et al., 2015; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). Swail et al. (2003) noted that in addition to the general challenges and stressors that come with being a college student, SOC at PWIs encounter added stressors because of their minority status. Smedley, Meyers, and Harrell (1993) found SOC experienced stress from social climate, interracial interactions, racism and discrimination, within-group

stresses, and academic stress. These minority-related stressors are compounded for WOC collegians (Chowhary, 1997; Rendon, 1992; Sengupta & Upton, 2011).

Gafford Muhammed and Dixson (2008) suggested that although women have a shared understanding because of their gender, WOC have experiences that are shaped considerably by racial interactions, and are unique to WOC. Gafford Muhammed and Dixson (2008) captured this uniqueness and noted:

Not only are campus environments male centered, but they also tend to privilege the Euro-American, middle-to upper-class heterosexual. People on campus who are neither male, White, middle to upper class, nor heterosexual are least likely to find cultural affinity or feel culturally safe on campus. (p. 116)

Watson, Terrell, Wright, and Associates (2002) discovered that for many SOC, the institutional environment is psychologically unhealthy and contributes to challenging academic and social adjustments. Feelings of isolation, invisibility, and silence do not typically render positive development and success in college. Miles et al. (2011) suggested, WOC are more likely to be successful and persist in college if they perceive the campus climate and culture to be affirming, receptive, and embodying the norms and values they personally hold.

Academic climate. The previous section on cognitive development illustrated the significance of WOC collegians to be viewed as holders and creators of knowledge, capable of authority on certain subjects. Doing so, positively informs their academic self-concept and self-efficacy (Belenky et al., 1986; Rendon, 1992; Tate & Linn, 2005). However, when academic spaces are also ‘chilly,’ exhibiting traits that are unwelcoming, non-affirming, and isolating, WOC collegians may experience considerable damage to their academic sense of self (Ong, Wright, Espinosa, & Orfield, 2011; Tate & Linn, 2005).

Proving process. Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) introduced the term “proving process” to describe the struggles SOC at PWIs face navigating academic spaces (p. 425). Utilizing a qualitative research design, Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) conducted focus groups and individual interviews with 15 academically successful Black students attending a PWI. The purpose of the study was to discover what social and academic experiences influence Black students’ overall experiences at a PWI (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). Their study discovered that SOC often feel pressured to prove their intellectual abilities to counter preconceived opinions based off stereotypes (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). In addition, SOC at PWIs often experience academic spaces in which they feel targeted to represent their entire race or ethnicity and/or gender in discussions (Quaye et al., 2015; Tatum, 1992). Feelings of difference can impact WOC’s sense of belonging, making it difficult to engage in common classroom practices like group work and study sessions (Tate & Linn, 2005).

Hidden curriculum. There is emergent literature that looks at the “hidden curriculum” (i.e., the unwritten rules embedded within an institutional structure and culture that inform how to navigate and exist within the space) that marginalized individuals, like WOC, are not privy to but must learn to survive and be successful in college (Esposito, 2011, p. 143; Margolis & Romero, 1998). This hidden curriculum significantly shapes how WOC engage with and navigate the campus environment. Esposito (2011) suggested WOC collegians create and negotiate their racialized and gendered beings based on several academic and social lessons. According to Esposito (2011), WOC collegians learn lessons about standard curricula (e.g., textbooks, lectures, and general subject matter), simultaneously while learning “how their bodies fit into larger political, social, and cultural contexts” (p. 144).

The double-bind. As WOC collegians learn to navigate the hidden curriculum in higher education, they are also required to negotiate the double-bind of racism and sexism in both social and academic spaces (Esposito, 2011). The double bind reflects the compounding effects of discrimination that hinder one's ability to successfully carryout tasks and accomplish goals (Esposito, 2011; Ong et al., 2011). Ong et al. (2011) synthesized research from 116 studies to reveal the postsecondary experiences of undergraduate and graduate WOC students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Their findings uncovered the ways in which race, ethnicity, and gender operated concurrently— “the double bind”—producing unique experiences for WOC in STEM (Ong et al., 2011, p. 176). Ong et al. (2011) posited WOC students were treated differently from their male counterparts by faculty and peers because of the compounding effects of race, gender, and ethnicity bias. WOC collegians, especially those pursuing STEM degrees, often find themselves as one of few women, and sometimes the only Person of Color. When WOC do not see themselves represented within the classroom environment, inclusive of having Faculty of Color as instructors and being exposed to diverse curricula that centers the voices of women and POC, WOC experience a loss of individualism as well as gender and cultural affinity (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Landry, 2002; Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

The review on institutional culture and climate revealed that indeed, context matters for the development of WOC collegians. For WOC collegians, attending an institution that is structurally diverse with a focused mission, possesses a critical mass of WOC, provides access to culturally congruent activities and support spaces, fosters meaningful peer and faculty mentoring

relationships, and embodies pedagogy inclusive of the lived experiences and history of WOC, facilitates their success and holistic development.

The Phenomenon of Leadership

This next section of literature illuminates the leadership development of WOC collegians after encountering the higher educational environment. The framing offered in the previous sections on the politics of social identity for WOC collegians, the social identity and cognitive development needs of WOC collegians, and the impact the institutional culture and climate have on WOC collegians' development, provide useful context in which to understand their leadership experiences. A clearer understanding of the leadership development of WOC collegians and higher education's role in aiding in that development, have direct implications for how WOC collegians understand, experience, and enact leadership during and after college.

Leadership Defined

While there are several interpretations, what has been widely accepted as central to the phenomenon of post-industrial leadership within a Western context, is that it is a process; it involves influence, occurs in groups, and involves common goals (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2013). Northouse (2013) posited that by defining leadership as a process, it denotes that it is neither a trait nor a characteristic that resides in the leader but rather a mutual event that occurs between the leader and the followers. Leadership is not linear, but dynamic and interactive. Northouse (2013) further suggested that when leadership is defined in this manner, it becomes available to everyone. But, what does leadership look like for 'everyone?'

The post-industrial leadership paradigm departs from industrial leadership paradigms that have historically defined leadership as hierarchical, positional, trait-based, and with little focus

on diversity, difference, and social context (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Dugan, 2017; Kezar et al., 2006). Although the leadership constructs framed by the industrial leadership paradigm have been challenged because of their essentialized approach to understanding, describing, and developing leadership; many aspects are still adopted and frame current conceptualizations of leadership. Several critical scholars have suggested that, to engage in leadership that is more dynamic and diverse, it must be reimagined, that is, made visible outside of the scope of whiteness, and anchored by more critical perspectives (Dugan, 2017; Kezar et al., 2006; Parker, 2001). These critical perspectives attend to social contexts, diversity, identity, and power within leadership. Parker (2001) specifically proposed that leadership be (re)conceptualized from a multicultural perspective, placing the perspectives of marginalized voices at the center of analysis. The reality is, leadership has been practiced from a multicultural perspective and by individuals on the margins. The challenge, however, is that we have been presented with a limited scope of what leadership is, who reflects the prototype, and have not been receptive to diverse ‘languages’ of leadership (i.e., understandings and approaches to leadership).

Parker (2001) defined leadership as “a localized, negotiated process of mutual influence that would theoretically accommodate multiple viewpoints and diverse situational challenges” (p. 44). Parker (2001) stated that viewing leadership as a set of universal constructs, garnered from a select few and generalized to a great many, is not adequate to understanding the leadership experiences of WOC within dominant-culture environments. Parker’s (2001) scholarship situates the experiences of African American women in the workforce. Specifically, Parker (2001) conducted a qualitative research study to examine 15 African American women

executives' leadership socialization and communication strategies within predominately White, male-centric organizations throughout the U.S. Although the context of Parker's (2001) study is not college WOC, her (re)conceptualized definition of leadership translates seamlessly when examining the leadership development of underrepresented groups like women and SOC in college.

College Student Leadership Development

Indeed, there has been an unwavering commitment to leadership development in college (Arminio et al., 2001; Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, 2006). This commitment is evident in institutional mission statements and reflective throughout many curricular and co-curricular programs and services provided to students while in college (Astin & Astin, 2000; Bennett & Wilezol, 2013; Dugan, 2006; Selingo, 2013). Allen and Roberts (2011) defined leadership development as "a continuous, systematic process designed to expand the capacities and awareness of individuals, groups, and organizations to meet shared goals and objectives" (p. 67). Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005) posited that leadership development involved continual engagement within a learning environment (e.g. college) to cultivate one's leadership abilities and efficacy. In this vein, and as suggested by Arminio et al. (2000), leadership development becomes an important component in the holistic development of college students, and a central goal of student affairs units in higher education. Yet, as posited by Dugan, Komives, and Segar (2008), leadership scholarship that specifically focuses on college students' leadership development is in its infancy.

Dugan et al. (2008) suggested, whereas a considerable amount of research on leadership development employed college students as the subject, very few of these studies were crafted to

understand leadership phenomena in a collegiate environment or within the context of student development theory. As Owen (2012) posited, “leadership development and human development are inextricably intertwined” (p. 18). The increasingly multifaceted ways of being, knowing, and doing are all essential processes for leadership growth (Owen, 2012). Even more, there is limited scholarship that explores leadership development for a diverse student body (see Arminio et al., 2000; Domingue, 2015; Dugan et al., 2008; Kezar, & Moriarty, 2000; Komives, Longenecker, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Dugan et al., (2008) posited that failing to account for the unique differences within a diverse student body would be in direct conflict with the espoused values of inclusion, diversity, and multiculturalism that undergird higher education practice. As higher education’s diverse student demographic continues to increase, coupled with the expansive variety of leadership theories, models, and approaches available, the manner taken to develop students and engage them in collegiate leadership experiences must be intentional, intersectional, and multifaceted (Arminio et al., 2000; Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, 2011; Owen, 2012; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

Race and leadership development. Although more recent leadership literature acknowledges the importance of social identity and social context when examining the leadership development of women and POC (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Dugan et al., 2012; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker, 2001; Parker, 2005), much of the scholarship on leadership, and subsequent models and theories, have been grounded in research based on White people, usually men, as the referent social identity group (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker, 2005). Ospina and Foldy (2009) cautioned assigning ‘Whiteness’ and western perspectives as the default lenses to measure the leadership experiences of POC. Doing

so, they posited, fails to consider diverse voices, and the unique leadership perspectives and contributions POC have made (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Even more, failing to include POC in leadership research limits the generalizability and validity of the research (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). As suggested by Parker (2001), “it is fruitful to learn about leadership from the perspective of people who struggle against race, gender, and class oppression” (p. 73).

While not expansive, there is increasing scholarship that examines the interplay of racial identity and leadership development for college students. Scholarship has uncovered how collective racial esteem, leader/leadership perception, and curricular and co-curricular engagement, inform the leadership experiences and development of SOC. Each of these areas are reviewed below.

Collective racial esteem. More recent scholarship has sought to explore how collective racial esteem (CRE) intersects with the leadership development of students with diverse racial group memberships. Dugan, Kodama, and Gebhardt (2012) employed CRE as a construct to better understand the effects of race on socially responsible leadership development. Their study utilized data from the 2009 cycle of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL), which represented 8,510 participants from 101 institutions of higher education throughout the U.S. The MSL is a quantitative study that examines college’s impact on students’ capacities for socially responsible leadership. Participants reflected college students from multiple racial and/or ethnic groups (i.e., 5% African American/Black, 8% Asian Pacific American, 4% Latino, 1% Middle Eastern, 8% multiracial, 0.4% Native American, 73% White, and 1% race not listed as option; Dugan et al., 2012). Findings from their study revealed that the construct of CRE provided a more comprehensive picture of socially responsible leadership capacity than individual measures

of racial group membership (Dugan et al., 2012). Stated plainly, the multi-layer facets of CRE (i.e., private CRE, public CRE, membership CRE, and identity salience) better represented the role race plays in socially responsible leadership development for college students.

Utilizing the same MSL dataset, Kodama and Dugan (2013) analyzed the predictors of race on leadership self-efficacy (LSE). LSE is defined as a person's belief that they can successfully engage in leadership (Bandura, 1997; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). They discovered that while not a significantly huge predictor in leadership self-efficacy, CRE was a predictor for leadership capacity (i.e., the acquiring of skills and abilities to engage in leadership practice; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). The findings from these two studies reiterate the impact social identities, like race, have on an individual's experience and engagement with leadership. Given the paucity of WOC participating in leadership in college and the workforce, understanding how a construct like CRE influences LSE and promotes socially responsible leadership, is critical.

Leader/leadership perception. There have been a few studies in the higher education student leadership literature that explore leadership development through a lens of race. Several of these studies revealed how women and SOC experience incongruence with the term leader and at times navigate negative perceptions about their leadership based on their race. Arminio et al. (2000) conducted a three-year phenomenology study, of 106 men and women SOC at two midsized comprehensive public institutions. The purpose of their study was to understand the leadership experiences of SOC leaders (Arminio et al., 2000). Key findings from their study revealed that SOC leaders felt incongruence with being labeled a leader; instead considered themselves "involved," contributing towards the shared goals of the organization (p. 501). Arminio et al. (2000) also discovered that the SOC leaders in their study expressed losing

something by participating in leadership experiences in college. Specifically, there was a challenge negotiating elements of their social identities, similar to what Anzaldúa (1990) described as putting forth pieces of oneself to find approval in the dominant culture and survive.

In another study, Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) examined Black students' engagement with traditional campus organizations (i.e., non-culturally specific spaces that promote friendship and prepares students for civil, political, and social realities after college) and culturally-specific organizations. The sample for their study comprised Black students who were both members and non-members of Greek letter organizations attending PWIs and historically Black institutions in the south (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Findings from this study revealed that culturally-congruent organizations were the primary organization types in which Black students participated (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Tied back to leadership perception, many of the student leaders in this study did in fact perceive themselves as leaders, however, they viewed leadership from a more collective framework, as service towards others (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001).

While limited, there have been select studies that have explored how the perceptions of others within one's racial group, impacts how individuals engage with and identify with leading and leadership. Haber-Curran (2013) explored the leadership styles, influences, successes, and challenges of four senior WOC leaders at a mid-sized private religiously affiliated university. Haber-Curran (2013) discovered that the WOC student leaders in her study expressed challenges from being stereotyped or misunderstood by peers from their racial and ethnic groups around their involvement, and experienced feelings of marginalization based on ethnic identity when assignments and tasks were distributed. Several scholars have also touched on this particular

challenge when they discovered that the SOC in their studies believed positional leadership roles separated them from other students in their racial and ethnic groups (Arminio et al., 2000; Fries-Britt, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, 1997). Arminio et al. (2000) posited that for some African American and Black students, being a leader suggested that they “bought into the system that oppressed their racial group,” causing alienation from their peers (p. 500). These self- and external perceptions of leadership provide context for how WOC engage in the higher education environment to embark on leadership opportunities.

Engagement. Select research has illustrated the impact of racial identity on students’ engagement and leadership development. Baughman and Bruce (2011) conducted a qualitative study of 12 undergraduate student leaders at North Carolina State University. Study participants represented student leaders from several minority populations inclusive of: African American, Asian, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender, Hispanic, Jewish, and Muslim (Baughman & Bruce, 2011). The purpose of their study was to determine how minority student leaders make meaning of leadership experiences while in college, discover what factors motivated minority student leaders to become leaders, and learn about changes in the student leaders’ leadership skills while in college (Baughman & Bruce, 2011). Their study revealed that minority student leaders nurtured their sense of self and identity by participating in organizations that were unique to their own populations. Baughman and Bruce (2011) suggested minority student leaders’ development is influenced by interpersonal relationships with family, peers, and the university community. This finding is particularly poignant when WOC collegians are centered; specifically, the role that the social environment plays in one’s leadership development. As the literature on social identity development for WOC revealed, interconnections with others greatly informs WOC

collegians' self-definition and identity development. As this study showed, relationships also inform leadership growth.

Examining the impact participation in Black Greek-letter organizations (BGO) had on Black students' involvement and leadership development, Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) conducted a quantitative study on 387 Black students from 12 diverse institutions. Utilizing the *Student Involvement and Leadership Scale* (SILS), Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) gather data on Black students' perceptions of leadership, participation in college organizations, and involvement in positional leadership roles on campus. Their study revealed that BGO membership positively enhanced leadership skills and leadership efficacy (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998).

Later research by Harper and Quaye (2007) explored how student organizations served as a venue for Black identity expression and enhanced leadership development of African American male student leaders. Harper and Quaye (2007) conducted a phenomenological study to examine 32 traditional age (18-22) African American undergraduate men leaders across six Midwest research institutions. Their study found that African American male student leaders' engagement in both mainstream and culturally specific organizations, provided opportunities for cross-cultural learning, increased the ability to advocate for other marginalized groups on campus, and bolstered participants' Black identities (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Although these two studies do not focus on WOC collegians, focusing instead on Black student leaders, they do illuminate the importance of engagement and leadership. Even more, by focusing on the experiences of SOC, these two studies reiterate the importance of culturally specific spaces and organizations for SOC development.

Gender and leadership development. There is a paucity of research that examines the intersection of gender and race within leadership. This is problematic when attempting to examine leadership from the perspective of WOC. Ospina and Foldy (2009) posited, when scholarship explores women and leadership, it is indirectly referring to White women, with little acknowledgement of the differences between the perspectives and experiences of White women and WOC. That gender functions similarly across racial and ethnic groups, and that racism and sexism are equal processes that render similar results across race and gender groups, Parker (1996) argued, are two problematic assumptions with White-dominated gender and leadership. Parker (1996) also suggested that how WOC engage in leadership may not always be congruent with traditional cultural prescriptions for gender.

In their research on queering leadership, Muhr and Sullivan (2013) posited that the social construction of gender shapes how individuals, “affectively and through their material bodies—*ought to perform*” (p. 417). They suggested that these prescriptive gender roles are very present in how leadership is studied, understood, and enacted (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). In keeping with the post-modern feminist perspective of Judith Butler (1990), Muhr and Sullivan (2013) suggested that leadership was caught in the heterosexual matrix (i.e., hegemonic model of gender that assumes that body coherence requires stable sex and gender expression (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female). How individuals engage in leadership and expect others to, is often through the lens of this matrix. This can be problematic when seeking to understand how to best develop the leadership of individuals who may be gender non-conforming, or who choose not to prescribe to socially assigned gender roles.

Leadership development of college women. Although the amount of scholarship on college student leadership development is increasing, much of the research explores the leadership development of collegiate women and men collectively (see Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan, 2006; Dugan, 2011; Dugan et al., 2008; Fisher, Overland, & Adams, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). Within leadership studies scholarship there is a larger body of work that explores women's leadership development, however these studies are outside the context of college, as they focus on leadership in the workplace (see Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Parker, 2005). Studies that have focused on the leadership development of collegiate women explored positional leadership, predictors of post-collegiate leadership engagement, and college women's leadership styles.

Positional leadership. Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) conducted a qualitative study borrowing elements of case study and phenomenological methodologies to examine college women student leaders. These studies, conducted by the same researcher, were carried out to gain insight into their leadership styles and successes and challenges faced as a college student woman leader (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013). The four participants in each of these studies had diverse racial identities and classified as seniors. Findings from these two studies are important as they focus on the positional aspect of leadership; roles that are most often present in the college environment through student organizations and are promoted frequently as the most viable path for leadership development. These two studies revealed that college women student leaders adopted different approaches to leadership depending on context, conceptualized what it meant to be a leader based off messages from family and perceptions about gender, and

experienced challenges navigating the campus climate and balancing interpersonal relationships (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013).

Predictors of post-collegiate leadership. With the desire to understand why there is a prevalence of women's underrepresentation in elite leadership roles in the workforce (i.e. CEO, top executives, presidents, board members for major corporations), Yeagley, Subich, and Tokar (2010) used social cognitive career theory to explore college women's self-efficacy and outcome expectations for positions of elite leadership after college. One hundred and fifty-six college women from a large Midwestern university participated in the study. Data was collected using a self-report questionnaire about engagement in future elite leadership positions (Yeagley et al., 2010). Although participants in Yeagley et al.'s (2010) study were mainly White college women (80%), there was representation from college women who identified as African American, Asian American, American Indian, Biracial, and other ethnicities.

Yeagley et al. (2010) found that women's self-efficacy and outcome expectations were important to cultivate interest in, and set goals for, elite leadership positions. They believed that interests and goals have the potential to be reinforced when women view themselves as competent, and believe that engaging in certain tasks or activities will render positive outcomes (Yeagley et al., 2010). The major takeaway these authors posited was, "it is undisputable, the choices made in college affect future occupational outcomes" (Yeagley et al., 2010, p. 37). These findings uncover the role collegiate experiences and life influences have on WOC collegians' future experiences with leadership. This is particularly important framing for this study, that seeks to understand what factors shape the leadership experiences of WOC collegians. Even

more, this correlation, between college leadership and post-collegiate leadership, is necessary to consider when attempting to increase the number of WOC leaders in U.S. society.

Women's leadership styles. One of the first scholars to examine the leadership development of college women was Whitt (1994). Whitt (1994) conducted a qualitative study to examine the leadership experiences of women attending three women's colleges. Study participants were students, faculty, staff and alumnae, comprising 200 respondents between institutions (Whitt, 1994). Of this sample, 98 were undergraduate students across academic class level, from diverse racial and ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and were both leaders and non-leaders on campus (Whitt, 1994). Although the sample for this study were from women's colleges, findings from Whitt's (1994) study had implications for co-educational institutions. Whitt (1994) found that specific leadership styles and environmental factors influenced college women's leadership development. Her findings revealed that college women valued more relational leadership styles, and learned to lead by engaging with role models and participating in intentional leadership development activities (Whitt, 1994). Since this research focused on women who attended women's colleges, Whitt's (1994) study also illuminated the positive impact on leadership development when women attend institutions with a mission dedicated to the education and development of women (Whitt, 1994). Gender affirming spaces like women's colleges have a proven track record for developing future leaders and supporting the gender identity development of its students.

The lessons from each study above offer vital information that can prove beneficial for the leadership development of WOC collegians. Each study revealed that social identities like race and gender influence how individuals experience and enact leadership. Self-perceptions of

leadership abilities, external perceptions of one's leadership abilities, leadership self-efficacy, mentors and role models, positional leadership opportunities, and diverse leadership styles impact how women, and women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds experience leadership. It is important to keep these in mind as leadership development is (re) conceptualized for WOC collegians.

(Re)Conceptualizing Leadership Development for WOC Collegians

Within the context of college student leadership development there has been limited research on the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender within leadership (Domingue, 2015). Arminio et al. (2000) suggested that the exploration of leadership and diversity, specifically examining race, has been explored only superficially within the college context. In this same vein, scholarship that centers the voice of women, does so at the expense of silencing the unique needs of women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. This is problematic when attempting to explore the leadership development of WOC collegians who possess a social location that reflects irreducibly complex intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and other salient social identities. When WOC collegians are centered, much of their developmental needs are inferred from college leadership development literature that might examine gender and leadership (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Whitt, 1994), or SOC and leadership (Arminio et al., 2000; Baughman & Bruce, 2011; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000), or the literature focuses on minority women from a specific racial group (e.g. leadership development of Black college women; Domingue, 2015).

Leadership Development Themes for WOC collegians

Although the literature on the leadership development of WOC collegians is scant, the

gaps in literature have illuminated key ingredients I believe are necessary to develop this group. A look at the leadership research can offer insight into how WOC collegians come to understand leadership, who they define as leaders, and how they view themselves in the context of leadership. The following themes have been garnered from existing college student leadership literature, that when critically examined, prove useful to developing WOC collegians' leadership: new leadership prototypes, a focus on leadership self-efficacy, and intentional leadership identity development. Each is discussed below.

(Re) defined leader[ship] prototype. Dugan (2011) asserted leadership be understood as both a learned behavior and a socially constructed phenomenon, informed by historical and systematic societal conditions of oppression. How WOC collegians construct their understanding of leadership informs how they enact leadership. Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Luque, and House (2006) posited "leadership is in the eye of the beholder," and an individual's ideas and/or beliefs about who leaders are and the characteristics or behaviors they should exhibit, make up a person's implicit theories of leadership (p. 69). Leadership scholars discovered individuals make inferences about one's leadership abilities after observing and interpreting cues within their environment (Calder, 1977). These environmental cues become commonplace inferences or beliefs, and provide insight into how individuals react to, evaluate, and identify leaders (Pfeffer, 1977).

Early leadership researchers suggested that our perceptions of leader are formed from the leader prototypes we have constructed for ourselves (Lord, Forti, & Phillips, 1982; Rosch, 1978). Lord et al. (1982) upheld that individuals classify potential leaders based on similarities to the leadership prototype they have constructed. This classification process allows individuals to store

relevant information on ‘leader’ because it allows them to map unique leaders into like, preexisting, and meaningful cognitive categories (Lord et al., 1982). When positioned to provide information or make judgments about leadership, individuals will rely solely on the categorized prototypes of leaders, equating future new information with existing knowledge (Phillips & Lord, 1982).

What is appearing void in the literature, society, and the college environment is a prototype of leader and leadership for WOC collegians. Parker’s (2005) research on the leadership experiences of professional African American women, sought to (re)define the prototype for WOC. Parker (2005) declared that it is a necessary imperative to envision a more inclusive image of leader to disrupt fixed images (i.e., prototypes). Parker (2005), along with several other leadership studies scholars, suggested that consideration be taken for how marginalized groups like WOC, who struggle against systems of racial and gender oppression, do not fit an idealized prototype of leader and must negotiate new meanings of leader to successfully engage in leadership (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

When the leadership prototype is (re)defined, an acknowledgment for and respect of individuals’ orientation for collective leadership can be established. The literature, albeit limited, speaks to this type of leadership prototype for SOC and WOC collegians who view the work they do as collective leadership (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan et al., 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). Dugan et al. (2008) validated this finding further as they examined how race, gender, and sexual orientation influenced socially responsible leadership practices of college students. Their research revealed that across four of

the social change outcomes, African American and Black students' leadership aligned with cultural value orientations that valued collectivism (Dugan et al., 2008).

Since leader [ship] prototypes are constructed within our environments and from our lived experiences, as a society we must increase the representation of leadership from marginalized voices (Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). In addition, we must promote leadership approaches and theories that are contemporary and anchored in transformative, social change that captures multiple perspectives (e.g., transformational leadership, socially responsible leadership; Dugan 2006; Dugan & Komives, 2010). Finally, we must cultivate intentional connections between collegiate WOC and WOC professionals to nurture their leadership identity (Domingue, 2015; Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

Bolstered leadership self-efficacy. Findings from the 2012 MSL Insight report discovered that a necessary ingredient to (re)conceptualize the leadership development of all college students is to nurture a student's leadership self-efficacy (LSE; Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates, 2013). Often, leadership development is approached from a capacity building lens. However, insights garnered from the 2012 MSL study suggested that attention to LSE should occur before focusing on students' capacities for leadership (Dugan et al., 2013). LSE is defined as one's internal belief regarding the likelihood they will be successful when they attempt to lead (Bandura, 1997; Dugan et al., 2013). Leadership capacity on the other hand is the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that comprise one's ability to lead successfully (Dugan et al., 2013). The MSL Insight report reiterated that LSE is as important to develop as leadership capacity and neither functions without the other; collectively they harness the enactment of leadership, or leadership behaviors (Dugan, et al., 2013). LSE increases one's motivation to enact leadership,

increases capacity as well as performance, and allows individuals to dispel negative external feedback including stereotype threat, which is extremely important for groups historically marginalized like WOC collegians (Dugan et al., 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007).

Intentional leadership identity development. Hall (2004) posited, “Identity is probably the most important aspect of leader [ship] . . . development” (p. 154). Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) conceptualized leadership development through the lens of identity formation to exhibit how overt forms of gender bias interfere with the identity formation of women leaders. They revealed that ‘leader identity’ embodies both internalizing a leader identity persona and developing a heightened sense of purpose (Ely et al., 2011). Having a heightened sense of purpose is a result of psychosocial and identity development, as posited by Chickering and Reisser (1993). Ely et al., (2011) further posited that women leaders are most effective when their purposes are aligned with their personal values and directed towards a common good. By adopting this approach to leadership development, WOC collegians are able to consider their intersecting identities, social locations, and cultural values through their leadership experiences. It is critical to acknowledge the ways leadership identity intersects with other dimensions of identity like race, gender, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation (Abes et al., 2007). As Parker (2001) suggested, “the process of negotiating and reconciling identities contributes to the contours of [WOC’s] voice” and informs their standpoint; this standpoint is an instrumental resource for understanding leadership (p. 48).

Implications of WOC Collegians’ Engagement with Leadership

The literature has shown there is a correlation between college leadership experiences and post-collegiate leadership opportunities (Yeagley et al., 2010). Given this, it can be theorized

that how WOC collegians engage in leadership experiences in college and develop their leadership identity, can impact the number of WOC leaders in the workforce. The manner in which the higher education environment intentionally fosters leadership and identity development has implications for WOC collegians' future selves. As Freeman (1994) posited,

higher education does not have to do anything to discourage [WOC] since society already does so. Failing to encourage them, however, is to discourage them without even trying. [WOC] enter higher education with a handicap which the 'null environment' does nothing to decrease and may actually reinforce. (p. 219)

The collegiate environment at times can serve as a catalyst for perpetuating several barriers that limit WOC collegians' access to and desire for leadership in college. Barriers including campus climate coupled with self-deprivation, lack of role models/mentors, and diverse leadership styles can have adverse effects on the level of engagement in college for WOC (Domingue, 2015; Duckett, 2006). College WOC are entering the pipeline to professional fields; understanding how they lead and employing frameworks to assist in the development of their leadership identity, leadership self-efficacy, and leadership capacity can positively shape higher education, the workforce, and society.

Conceptual Framework

The literature review revealed important facets about the social identity development of WOC collegians and uncovered important gaps in the leadership literature on this group. Across all the literature reviewed, what was made apparent is that WOC collegians have not been adequately examined in the college student leadership literature, nor have they been placed at the center of analysis. Kimberle' Crenshaw (1994) proclaimed:

When we don't pay attention to the margins, when we don't acknowledge the intersection, where the places of power overlap, we not only fail to see the women who

fall between our movements, sometimes we pit our movements against each other. (p. 118)

WOC require movements that are intersectional, centering their lived experiences from a racial, ethnic, and gendered perspective. To acknowledge the margins, interrogate the places of power overlap, and elevate the voice and counter-narratives of WOC collegians in higher education, this study is anchored by critical race feminism, intersectionality, and positionality theory. As a collective, these theoretical approaches serve as the conceptual framework guiding this study. Each framework is discussed below.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF)

CRF is a theoretical framework that addresses racial and gender subordination from multiple angles (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). CRF was developed in response to the perceived exclusion and limited attention to the needs of WOC, within critical race theory (CRT) and feminist legal studies (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Several WOC scholars argued, CRT was dominated by men's experiences, overlooking and often excluding the experiences of WOC, while feminist legal scholarship centered the viewpoints of White upper-class women, assuming that the gendered experiences of WOC were the same as White women (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Because of this oversight, CRF was designed to unapologetically examine the effects of race, class, and gender oppression for WOC ((Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Sulé, 2011; Wing, 1997).

There are several key facets to a CRF perspective. CRF centers social identities while examining institutional and social factors (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). CRF, as posited by Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010), acknowledges that the experiences and perspectives of

WOC are different from the experiences and perspectives of Men of Color and White women. According to Sulé (2011), CRF recognizes that race, gender, and other salient social identities intersect and overlap and cannot be syphoned out individually from the identity of WOC. Hill-Collins (1990) explained this further when she suggested that an intersectional perspective “expands the focus of analysis from merely describing the similarities and differences distinguishing these systems of oppression and focuses greater attention on how they interconnect” (p. 222). CRF allows for the acknowledgment of “multiple consciousness” (Wing, 1997, p. 31). This multiple consciousness suggests that WOC’s realities are dialectic, signifying that WOC can hold two seemingly conflicting/contrary realities constant (i.e., WOC, maintaining personal beliefs and values, while navigating and being conscious of the perspective of her oppressor; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 1997). CRF is a useful framework to interrogate normative assumptions around identity and leadership development, by questioning, challenging, ultimately reconstructing assumptions to honor the experiences of WOC.

Intersectionality

Grounding this study in the understanding of WOC collegians multiple and intersecting social identities required intentional theoretical tools. Intersectionality is the second component of the conceptual framework guiding this study. Intersectionality posits that social identities like race, class, gender, and sexuality are mutually reinforcing social variables that inform subjectivity (Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016; Nash, 2008). Intersectionality acknowledges the “multidimensionality” of the lived experiences of marginalized individuals (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Nash (2008) highlighted several theoretical and political purposes of intersectionality, suggesting that it first, disrupts race and gender binaries to theorize identity in a more nuanced

and complex way. Second, intersectionality provides the necessary language needed to address critiques of identity politics; it “seeks to demonstrate the racial variation (s) within gender and the gendered variation (s) within race” (Nash, 2008, p. 2). With its roots in critical race studies, intersectionality has emerged as an essential theoretical tool to address the “interlocking effects of identities, oppressions, and privileges” to holistically understand the depth and breadth of WOC experiences (Hulko, 2009; Price, 2011, p. S55).

Positionality Theory

The final component of this study’s conceptual framework is positionality theory. Since identity development and leadership experiences do not occur in isolation, positionality theory was employed as heuristic lens for understanding how leadership manifests for WOC collegians by considering the interplay of context, power, and identity. Positionality theory, an extension of standpoint theory, suggests that identity is fluid and dynamic, affected by historical and social changes (Alcoff, 1988; Kezar & Lester, 2010). Positionality theory asserts that individuals have a social location that influences how their world is constructed (Kezar & Lester, 2010). An individual’s position is shaped by multiple identities (e.g., race, gender, and class) that concurrently create and strengthen individual perspectives (Hill-Collins, 1990). Positionality theory acknowledges that identities are complex, fluid, contextually bound, and associated with power; these serve as the components that shape the theory (Alcoff, 1988; Kezar, 2000; Kezar & Lester, 2010).

Together, CRF, intersectionality, and positionality theory served as the conceptual framework guiding this study. As a collective, these frameworks afforded WOC the opportunity to be treated as “paradigmatic humans” who “can serve as the source of data...to develop

theories about the human condition” (Williams, 2001, p.1). Not viewing individuals with marginalized social identities as holders and creators of knowledge, is a missed opportunity for theorizing about human development. Employing critical frameworks like these allow for a greater understanding of the power in WOC collegians’ counter-narratives, which is essential to disrupt dominant ideologies around social identity development and leadership in college.

Conclusion

The conceptual framework just introduced anchored the study outlined in the next chapter; ensuring each element of the study was nuanced and critical. After a thorough review of existing scholarship, what is needed is an intentional study that places WOC collegians at the center of analysis to understand the phenomenon of leadership from their vantage-point. The next chapter describes the methodology employed to accomplish this task. Chapter 3 introduces critical hermeneutic phenomenology as the qualitative methodological lens to examine how WOC collegians come to understand, experience, and enact leadership in college. The methods used to conduct this study are outlined as well as an overview of my epistemology and positionality as a researcher.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology and methods used to design and conduct this study. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of undergraduate WOC collegians attending predominately White institutions (PWIs) of higher education in the United States. Specifically, this study sought to better understand how leadership is learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians and discover how social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, inform this process. WOC collegians embody targeted social identities, as a woman and POC that have been historically and systematically marginalized in society and higher education (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2014; Patton et al., 2015). Considering this social location, WOC collegians navigate and experience the college environment at the intersection of their multiple identities; some cognizant and some unaware of how these complex intersections inform their overall experiences.

Given higher education's regard as an ideal place for identity and leadership development, having a greater understanding of how WOC collegians make meaning of their own social identities, and in turn, how that informs their understanding of leadership, is necessary for adequate development of this group. The following research questions guided this study:

Within the context of one's multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?

- (a) What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians' understanding/enactment of leadership?
- (b) How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?
- (c) What factors motivate WOC collegians to engage in leadership?

In the sections to follow, I provide a rationale for utilizing qualitative methodology, followed by an overview of my epistemological beliefs rooted in critical, feminist, and constructivist interpretive frameworks. I then introduce the specific methodological approach for this study, critical hermeneutic phenomenology. Next, I describe the methods of this study, including population, sampling, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. With an understanding that my own perspectives and lived experiences inform this research, this chapter concludes with a discussion of my positionality and the reflexivity exercises used throughout the study to lessen bias.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was selected for this research study because of its ability to examine how individuals construct meaning, how individuals make sense of their realities, and how they experience the world around them (Merriam, 2009). Finding its roots in anthropology and sociology, qualitative inquiry explores social phenomena at the “intersection of social context and biography” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 9). In this regard, qualitative research is considered a “holistic” approach to research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 9). Essential to qualitative research is an understanding of phenomena from the perspective of the participants, not the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Through this lens, qualitative research has the ability to examine individuals

from all walks of life, and “give voice to points of view of people marginalized in society” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 10). This trait of qualitative inquiry is important as the population for this study were WOC collegians. Qualitative methodologies that ‘give voice’ to those in the margins, and place the focus of inquiry on capturing the counter-narrative, can “turn the margins into places of transformative resistance” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 38).

Epistemology

I approached this qualitative research study with my epistemological beliefs rooted in critical, feminist, and constructivism interpretive frameworks (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). My critical feminist epistemology allowed me to elevate the voices of WOC while interrogating the social structures that define their realities; seeking to “correct both the visibility and distortion of [WOC collegians’] experiences in ways relevant to ending [their] unequal social position” (Lather, 1991, p. 71). A critical perspective acknowledges that reality is best learned and understood through the deconstruction and reconstruction of social structures, marginalization, power, and domination (Creswell, 2013; Gibson, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Hill-Collins, 1986; Olesen, 2011). With a feminist epistemology, I understand that the social construction of gender matters and informs how individuals understand and engage with the world around them (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013; Tong, 2014). A constructivist lens allows me to respect that there is no universal truth and that reality is co-constructed by multiple individuals and groups, ultimately shaping one’s lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002). As Gibson (2007) suggested, “experiences are shaped by ‘what people do not do as much as by what they do,’ . . . experiences are never unmediated but are historically located and situated” (p. 448).

Through these epistemological frameworks, I believe that WOC collegians' ways of knowing are negotiated socially and historically; formed through social interactions and reinforced by cultural norms (Merriam, 2009). I also believe that these constructions of reality do not operate in silos, but are informed, shaped, and embedded in historically situated systems of power (Hatch, 2002). I believe WOC collegians' diverse lived experiences, and the social structures that construct those experiences, must be centered and problematized. These epistemological orientations align with the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2. By exploring WOC collegians, and the multiplicity that comprises this group, I could better describe how their realities are constructed within the higher education environment.

Constructivism and critical/feminist epistemologies acknowledge that the researcher is an integral part of the research experience; co-constructing meaning alongside participants and providing the critical analysis necessary to effect change (Creswell, 2013). Given my own standpoint as a Black woman, who has experienced higher education as both student and administrator, I have a vested interest in this topic and the population being studied. Within every facet of this study, I sought to honor participants' identities, journeys to self-awareness and knowledge, and most importantly their socially constructed realities.

Overview of Phenomenology

Given my epistemological orientation and my desire to honor the identities and lived experiences of collegiate WOC, phenomenology was the qualitative design used to conduct this study (Melançon, 2014). Phenomenology is the study of people's everyday life and social interactions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Giorgi (1975) described phenomenology as "the study of the structure, and the variations of structure, of the consciousness to which any—thing,

event, or person appears” (p. 72). As a methodological framework, phenomenology involves identifying the essence and foundational meaning of a phenomenon or a concept (Creswell, 2013; Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader, 2012). van Manen (1990) described essence as “the very nature,” or core of an experience (p. 177). The philosophy of phenomenology was developed in the early 1900s by Edmund Husserl (Creswell, 2013; Melançon, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Since its inception, several philosophers (e.g., Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Giorgi) have contributed to the creation of phenomenological studies and methodologies (Creswell, 2013; Melançon, 2014). Studies that employ a phenomenological approach have been described as descriptive, scientific, methodical, systematic, critical, and able to render general insight (Giorgio, 1985).

Critical hermeneutic phenomenology. The phenomenon of interest for this study was leadership and WOC collegians’ experience with it. Merriam (2009) posited, phenomenologists are not concerned with labeling, simplifying, and reducing phenomena to abstract concepts, but instead are focused on the lived experience. Phenomenologists, as posited by Morrissey and Higgs (2006), “do not view human experience as an unreliable source of data, rather they see it as the cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena” (p. 162). A focus such as this required the study to be centered on ‘what’ individuals experience and ‘how’ they experience it (Creswell, 2013). To fully examine the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of collegiate WOC’s leadership experiences, and to honor the theoretical frameworks that grounded this study, critical hermeneutic phenomenology was the specific phenomenological approach used.

Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for a deeper abstraction of participants’ experiences, while utilizing the study’s theoretical frameworks and researcher’s personal knowledge (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). With a hermeneutic lens, the researcher can offer deeper interpretations, and

make assumptions within reason, about an individual's lived experience that they themselves may find challenging to fully explain (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Critical phenomenology places emphasis on the social and political structures that shape lived experiences and recognizes the importance of naming these structures as the essence is defined (Bourdieu, 2000; Melançon, 2014). A critical lens allowed attention to be placed on how WOC collegians' social identities and social location inform and shape how they experience the phenomenon.

Separately, hermeneutic and critical phenomenology can illuminate unique insight about the essence of a phenomenon. However, "hermeneutics by itself cannot provide an adequate explanation of social phenomena" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 218). Hermeneutic and critical analyses are complementary in nature. When coupled together, critical hermeneutic phenomenology creates a platform to examine not only how phenomena is experienced and perceived by the individuals who give it meaning (i.e., hermeneutics), but also by the structural relations through which those meanings are created (i.e., critical; Hood, 2016).

Critical hermeneutic phenomenology was a useful approach to examine WOC collegians and their experiences with leadership. As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 uncovered, there is limited scholarship that explores the nuanced lived experiences of WOC college students. Even more, when the conversation is situated on the topic of leadership, how it is learned, experienced, and practiced, there is no definitive understanding of what this looks for WOC collegians. This is mainly because what is available is a composite of the experiences of all SOC and women in general. As critical race feminism proclaims, the experiences and perspectives of WOC are very different from Men of Color and White women (Evans-Winters & Esposito 2010). Capturing the

essence of how WOC collegians experience and engage with leadership in college is essential for improving institutional policies and leadership development interventions for this group.

Defining features of phenomenology. Like many other qualitative approaches, researchers who conduct phenomenology studies come from different perspectives and epistemological orientations, making the facilitation of this methodology diverse (Creswell, 2013). Regardless of the orientation, there are several defining features of phenomenology. First, there is a focus on a phenomenon or single concept (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In most forms of phenomenology, the researcher engages in *epochè*, bracketing oneself out of the study to avoid bias. Philosophers have varied in their viewpoints on engaging in *epochè* (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2009). *Epochè*, along with its tensions, is discussed in further detail in the section on positionality and reflexivity.

Another defining feature of phenomenology is horizontalization. As data is reviewed, researchers engage in a process of horizontalization, treating all pieces of data equally then organizing the data thematically (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Within a phenomenology study there is also phenomenological reduction, which warrants continually returning to the essence of the phenomenon to construct the core meaning (Merriam, 2009). The final product of a phenomenology study is a “composite description,” which illustrates the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). A composite description captures ‘what’ and ‘how’ individuals experience the phenomenon. When comprised well, individuals reading the composite description have a clear understanding of the phenomenon, as if they too experienced it for themselves (Merriam, 2009).

Collegiate phenomenological studies. Due to its focus on understanding the essence of

the lived experience, phenomenology has been a useful methodological approach for a variety of research on students in college. There have been several phenomenology studies in higher education to examine the phenomenon of leadership for college students. Concerned with whether leadership programs aligned with the leadership values and orientations of student leaders of color, Arminio et al. (2000) conducted a three-year phenomenology study of 106 men and women SOC at two midsized, comprehensive, public institutions. Study participants represented diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and were all traditional age (18-21) college students. One theme Arminio et al. (2000) discovered, further validating the importance of this study. There are gender differences in leadership experiences. While Arminio et al. (2000) interviewed WOC in their study, this group was not the center of analysis. Nor were critical frameworks employed to understand how institutional and societal factors inform experiences with the phenomenon of leadership.

Examining the experiences of high-achieving African American undergraduate men leaders at PWIs, Harper and Quaye's (2007) phenomenological study contributed to the literature by unveiling how leadership opportunities informed Black identity expression and development. This study is unique in that it examined how SOC lead in both mainstream and culturally specific organizations and how those experiences mediate identity expression and development. Harper and Quaye (2007) conducted interviews with 32 traditional age (18-22) African American undergraduate men leaders across six Midwest research institutions. One of the key findings from this study was the importance of culturally specific organizations for the leadership development and identity expression for SOC. This is useful framing for this study as diverse leadership experiences of WOC are a central criterion. Although Harper and Quaye's (2007)

study infused critical perspectives into their study by naming social and political systems that impact SOC leadership, it was narrowly focused on African American men student leaders. This study departed from this approach by exploring WOC college students from a variety of racial and ethnic groups.

Exploring the leadership styles, influences, successes, and challenges of senior classified college student women leaders at one mid-sized private religiously affiliated university, Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) conducted a qualitative study borrowing elements of case study and phenomenological methodologies. Like this study, Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) used multiple forms of data collection including one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and participant journals. She conducted these studies because she acknowledged that there was a lack of information on how college women leaders engage in leadership, inclusive of gender roles and norms. Haber-Curran too was interested in understanding the lived experiences of college student women leaders from diverse racial social identities. The participants in these two studies were White, Native Hawaiian, and Asian American student women leaders (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013). In both studies, the sample populations were small, comprising only four college student women leaders. Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) posited that this small sample size allowed for information rich descriptions to best articulate the phenomenon in question. A key finding from Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) was that gender matters in women's leadership experiences. Although the women in these studies represented racial diversity, this facet of their identity was not discussed at all in relation to their experiences with the phenomenon of leadership nor within the contexts of their unique social locations.

This study extended the work of the research mentioned above, by placing attention on

how gender converges with other social identities like race and ethnicity, to understand how WOC collegians experience leadership. Even more, through the utilization of critical frameworks like CRF, intersectionality, and positionality theory, institutional and societal factors are intentionally examined and scrutinized to capture a holistic picture of WOC collegians' engagement with leadership. Like the studies reviewed above, this study placed concerted focus on centering the lived experiences of participants to capture their nuanced understandings of certain phenomena. This intentionality illustrates the usefulness of phenomenology as a methodological approach which strives to capture the essence, or heart of a phenomena as experienced by individuals (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The next section of this chapter reviews the methods conducted to carry out this study.

Research Methods

This critical hermeneutic phenomenology study was designed to explore the experiences WOC college students have with leadership. This study sought to provide rich descriptive accounts of the essence of leadership for this group. A variety of methods were employed to paint a more cohesive picture of this phenomenon for WOC collegians. This section provides a description of the population, sampling, data collection and data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

Population

The population of interest for this study were undergraduate WOC collegians. With full recognition of the risk associated with examining a 'generic' category of women—obscuring the unique voice and experience of each racial and ethnic group (see, Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hayes, 2001; Patton et al., 2015)—the literature affirms the value and importance of exploring

the collective experiences of WOC; it offers a common language and creates solidarity amongst WOC within and across difference (Niskodé-Dossett, Boney, Bullock, Cochran, & Kao, 2011; Vaccaro, 2011; Vidal-Ortiz, 2008).

The criteria required to fulfill this population included the following: 1) participants must identify as a cisgender woman. Cisgender denotes that one's biological sex aligns with their gender identity and expression. 2) Participants must identify as a Person of Color. A Person of Color is an individual from a racial (e.g., African American/Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latin@, Native American, Multi-racial; defined by physiological characteristics like skin color, phenotype, and hair) and/or ethnic (e.g., defined by cultural factors like language, nationality, religion, and ancestry) minoritized group in the U. S. (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). 3) The United States is their permanent/official home of residence. 4) Participants must be an undergraduate student at one of the 4-year private, predominately White institutions (PWIs) in the "Midwest city" local area, with a second year or higher classification. 5) Participants must have engaged (currently or in the past) in a leadership experience (e.g., community organizer, student leader/activist, student advisor, student scholar, volunteer etc.) in college—on campus or in the community.

The criteria above were selected to best solicit WOC collegians. There are several studies that have examined the leadership experiences of women or SOC, but very few have centered WOC as the subject (Arminio et al., 2000; Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007). To capture the essence of the phenomenon of leadership for WOC collegians, this group had to be the focus of the study to fully examine their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The literature in Chapter 2 spoke to the importance of gender identity as WOC collegians develop their self-concept as well as the role gender plays in leadership development

(Bem, 1981; Haber-Curran, 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Parker, 1996).

The perspectives from WOC who identified as cisgender allowed attention to be placed on how traditional gender and sex roles influence leadership experiences. This gender nuance was included given the role external mechanisms, that inform gender-related ideas and behavior, have on social cognitive gender development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Bussey and Bandura further posited that gender-roles and expression are a byproduct of social contexts like culture and social identities. A better understanding of how WOC are socialized by gender and how they ultimately express it, provides useful framing to understand their leadership experiences in college.

U.S. domestic WOC at private PWIs were the focus of interest for several reasons. Due to the socio-political construction of social identity in the United States (Tatum, 2013), the manifestation of racial and ethnic group membership looks different based on the history of the United States. The ways in which these socially constructed social identity groups manifest will be unique to the countries in which they were created. For example, other countries, like Brazil, experience social stratification based on class, or phenotype. However, within U.S. American history, there has been constant struggle over the definition of, and value placed on social identities, specifically minoritized social identities like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and gender (Crenshaw, 1991; Tatum, 2013; Wiley, 1994). While international students may hold marginalized social identity group memberships, how domestic WOC collegians have been socialized around their identity and leadership development within the U.S. context is based on the context of the United States. To better examine the social and political systems that

perpetuate the marginalization of collegiate WOC's social identities in society and higher education, international students were excluded from this study.

Private PWIs were the chosen setting for this study to explore how WOC students navigate highly selective, often culturally incongruent institutional environments that lack a critical mass of POC on campus (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). The study's sample reflected private PWIs and not public PWIs because of the institutional composition of the "Midwest City" area. To establish a common baseline, I selected institutions of like Carnegie classification (i.e., highly selective, high research), student body demographics, and size. Of the institutions in the "Midwest City" area, the four that shared these baseline specifications were private institutions.

Literature has shown that PWIs, regardless of public or private status, often struggle to address the needs of WOC college students (Esposito, 2011; Marine, 2011; Miles et al., 2011; Vaccaro, 2011). WOC attending any type of PWI are frequently affected by the compounded effects of racism and sexism (Vaccaro, 2011). They often "experience campus climates that are unsupportive, hostile, or alienating;" factors that have been shown to contribute to stress and incongruence with the college experience (Vaccaro, 2011, p. 105). At PWIs, WOC are often in spaces where their "bodies [are] marginalized, if considered at all" (Sulé, 2011). This institutional climate directly informs the level of engagement WOC collegians have while in college (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus & Harris, 2010; Quaye, Griffin, & Museus, 2015). For these reasons, this study focused on the impact PWIs had on how WOC collegians as they engaged in leadership experiences while in college.

Several studies have shown the significance of placing parameters on student

classification when examining leadership experiences (Arminio et al., 2000; Domingue, 2015; Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran-2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007). Including students in their second year or higher ensures participants have been exposed to the institutional culture and have had time to serve in a leadership opportunity on campus (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007). Given the small numbers of SOC at PWIs, and even smaller numbers of SOC leaders at PWIs (Dugan, Kodama, & Correia, 2013; NCES, 2015), participants were solicited from multiple PWIs in the “Midwest City” area.

By increasing the institution representation, more WOC were solicited to participate and maximum variation was achieved in the sample. The “Midwest City” area was selected because of its large consortium of higher education institutions. In addition, the “Midwest City” area is racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse. However, it has been a city plagued with a history of racial and class stratification, which impacts the communities in which these institutions are housed, and indirectly influences the experiences of its students. As the WOC in this study explained their experiences at their respective PWIs, the city’s rich history provided deeper contextual framing. Finally, to capture the essence of a phenomenon, it was important that participants had a shared experience with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Because the phenomenon for this study was leadership, it was required that each participant have engaged in a leadership experience while in college.

Sampling

Due to the specificity of the population being studied, criterion-based selection with maximum variation was utilized to capture the sample for this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; LeCompote, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). In criterion-based selection, a list of important attributes is

created to identify participants. The criteria for this study can be found in the previous section describing the study population. Maximum variation was utilized to ensure the widest possible range of characteristics of interest for the population are captured within the sample (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009). Maximum variation was achieved through diverse racial and ethnic group membership, leadership experiences, classification, and institution affiliation.

The sample was gathered through a variety of mediums. After receiving Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval, I began the process to acquire the sample for this study. First, colleagues at private PWIs in the “Midwest City” area were contacted via email and asked to share the study details (see Appendix A) with WOC college students in their networks whom they believed met the study criteria. My summer research assistant gathered the names and contact information of institutional partners across the four private PWIs in the “Midwest City” area so that they could be included in the email request. Colleagues were included if they worked in some capacity with WOC on their campuses.

These colleagues worked in a variety of functional areas at their institutions, including but not limited to: Multicultural Affairs, Student Diversity, Greek Life, Student Activities, Residence Life, Leadership Development, and the Dean’s Office. Announcements (see Appendix C) about the study were also distributed through various institutional listservs for SOC and students in leadership. Due to participant recruitment occurring in August, initially recruitment was slow. However, institutional partners sent the study details out multiple times to ensure broad reach. Recruitment occurred over a four-week period. Students who expressed interest were asked to complete a brief online demographic survey (see Appendix D). The final sample was drawn after demographic information was reviewed and maximum variation achieved.

A total of 11 WOC collegians across 4 private PWIs in the “Midwest City” area completed the demographic survey. The sample size for phenomenology studies vary, with many erring on the side of smaller samples. The higher education phenomenology studies shared earlier varied in sample size. Studies that had larger sample sizes had multiple researchers and/or conducted their study over multiple years (see Arminio et al., 2000; Harper & Quaye, 2007). Since this study was completed by a single researcher and conducted in one data collection cycle, 10 WOC collegians were accepted into the study. The 11th participant that expressed interest and who met the study’s criteria, had a family emergency and no longer could participate. I believe that this number allowed for information rich descriptions to be obtained and captured the experiences of several WOC with diverse demographics.

Given the diversity and maximum variation achieved from the first round of recruitment, no additional participants were solicited to participant beyond the 10 selected. After the first round of interviews, one participant withdrew from the study noting lack of time to commit. After reviewing my field notes and listening to this participant’s interview, it was clear the participant struggled to understand and answer the protocol questions. After comparing her first interview data with other collected data, I concluded this participant’s interview did not offer new insight into the study and elected to not transcribe nor include this interview data in my analysis. A grand total of 9 WOC collegians with various social identities, leadership experiences, and institutional affiliations completed the entire study. Table 1 below describes the demographic background of each participant.

Table 1. WOC participant demographic information

Participant Name*	Racial Identification	Ethnic Identification	Classification	Institutional Affiliation
Isolde	Black (Bi-Racial-Black and White)	None listed	Fourth year	PWI-1
Stephanie	Asian	Pacific Islander (Filipino)	Third year	PWI-1
Lisa	African American	Black	Fourth year	PWI-2
Marie	Black	African, Caribbean, & Black	Second year	PWI-3
Myka	Black	African American	Second year	PWI-4
Nadia	Bi-Racial (Black and White)	African American	Second year	PWI-4
Roberta	Mexican	Latinx	Second year	PWI-4
Ruby	Latino	Puerto Rican/ Salvadorian	Third year	PWI-4
Anna	Multi-racial	Latina	Second year	PWI-4
* Participant names are pseudonyms self-selected by the participant and used throughout the study to maintain anonymity.				

Data Collection

Multiple forms of data were collected to capture a more holistic picture of WOC collegians' experience with leadership at the intersection of their multiple social identities. Van Manen (1990) spoke to the use of multiple forms of data collection in phenomenological research, inclusive of observations, journals, music and others. For this study, demographic surveys, in-depth one-on-one interviews, and vision boards were utilized. Each collection method is discussed below.

Demographic Survey

Individuals that expressed interest in participating in the study completed a brief online demographic survey (see Appendix D). This online survey was administered through Google Forms and required approximately five minutes of time to complete. The demographic survey provided basic information to insure the criteria to participate was met. Information on the participants' race, ethnicity, gender, classification, institutional affiliation, major, age, hometown, leadership experiences in college, and whether they identify as a WOC were

captured. Individuals were selected to participate based on the information provided in the online demographic survey. To maintain participants' anonymity throughout the study, pseudonyms were selected by participants through the online demographic survey.

Interviews

In a phenomenology study, interviews are the primary format for data collection. These interviews should be in-depth and occur at least twice to insure rich and descriptive information is gathered (Creswell, 2013). The interviews for this study were semi-structured with open-ended questions that spoke directly to the phenomenon in question. According to Merriam (2009) semi-structured interviews are “flexibly worded” and have a mixture of structured and unstructured questions (p. 90). Due to the critical nature of this phenomenology study, questions were also asked that spoke to participants' social identities and how those identities manifest within their experiences with leadership.

Prior to the first interview, participants were emailed an electronic copy of the consent to participate in research form (see Appendix E). The consent form outlined the purpose of the study, criteria, risks and benefits of participating. Participants were asked to review the consent form prior to our first interview and share any concerns or questions they may have prior to the interview starting. At the time of the first interview, participants received a printed copy of the consent to participate in research form to sign. A copy of the signed consent form was scanned and emailed to the participant for their records. The scanned copy was stored on my personal password protected computer and a secured online server. The original signed paper copy of the consent form was maintained in a locked file cabinet until the end of the study when it was destroyed.

Given the relative proximity to participants' home institutions, all but two interviews were in-person. Due to the various academic schedules of each institution represented in the study, one participant, Marie, was not in town during the first round of interviews, resulting in her first interview occurring via skype. The second half of the second interview for Marie was also completed via skype due to a scheduling issue with room reservations. Scholars have spoken to the benefits and usefulness of online video interviews, noting that they allow for more flexible time options and increased participation (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Interviews were conducted twice for this study, once before completion of the vision board and one after. Interviews ranged in time with the first interviews lasting between 60 to 75 minutes. The second interview served as an opportunity to clarify items from the first interview and review vision boards. These interviews averaged 45 to 75 minutes each. Participants were asked open-ended questions about their childhood experiences, schooling, people who have influenced their life, leadership experiences, how they conceptualized their salient social identities (for example: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic class), and the interplay of these social identities with leadership. Given the complexity and nuance of this topic and the unique social location of each participant, I found myself modifying the interview protocol after completing the first four interviews.

Through reflexivity, I was able to step back and assess the needs of my participants and realized that I needed to reframe several questions to make them more accessible to allow for better comprehension. Interview One protocol was revised twice to provide better clarity to the remaining participants in the study. Four participants (including the participant who withdrew from the study) were interviewed using 'interview one protocol' (see Appendix F). Three

participants were interviewed using ‘interview one protocol-revised 9.12.16’ (see Appendix F-2). Three participants were interviewed using ‘interview one protocol-revised 9.26.16’ (see Appendix F-3). The changes made across the three protocol iterations were very slight, primarily re-ordering questions, and/ or rewording for better clarity. However, these changes allowed for deeper meaning to be obtained and more robust articulation of the phenomenon being study. Formal interview protocols for this study can be found in Appendices F-1, F-2, F-3, and G.

Participants were also asked for consent to be audio recorded during each interview. Utilizing an audio recording device allowed me to focus on my participants and take field notes to jot down key phrases, reactions, and emotions. All interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. To become more intimate with the data I transcribed two of the first-round interviews personally. With financial support from the Graduate School’s Research Mentoring Program and ACPA College Student Educators International’s Commission for Student Involvement research grant, the remaining 16 audio recordings (i.e., 7 first-round, 9 second-round interviews) were transcribed by a professional transcription company. Audio recordings and interview transcripts were stored on my personal password protected computer and a secured online server.

Vision Boards

At the end the first interview, participants were provided with instructions to craft a vision board (see Appendix H). Vision boards are a type of collage that can include pictures, words, quotes, or any other artifact significant to the participant. Vision boards, as a data collection method, fit under the umbrella of arts-based research (ABR; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Leavy, 2009). ABR is an emerging field in academia and qualitative research, utilizing art as a conduit of inquiry, data collection, and/or analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot &

Davis, 1997; Leavy, 2009). Within the realm of educational research, arts-based research is known as arts based educational research (ABER), and has been applied to a variety of qualitative methodological approaches including narrative inquiry, ethnography, phenomenology, and action research (Smithbell, 2010). ABER honors multiple ways of knowing (Greenwood, 2012; Smithbell, 2010). Through diverse mediums (e.g., photography, sculptures, poetry, creative writing, theater, film, dance, collages), researchers can “investigate, describe, and interpret the world” (Greenwood, 2012, p. 4). Visual mediums, as posited by Smithbell (2010), substantiate written information and provide additional lenses in which to understand a phenomenon.

Within the context of this study, vision boards served as the ABER method to better understand how WOC collegians visually capture who they are, how they have come to understand what leadership is, and how they view leadership within the context of their salient social identities. The theme for the vision board was: My ‘vision’ of leadership. Each participant was instructed to create a vision board to capture what leadership means to them. They were told that their board should visually capture who they are, how they have come to understand what leadership is, and how they view leadership within the context of their salient social identities. Participants were encouraged to include what or who inspires them, feeling free to include pictures, inspirational quotes, inspiring words, or whatever they felt captured their ‘vision’ of leadership.

Participants could construct their vision boards digitally or by hand, using magazines, pictures, or other sources of inspiration. Construction of visions boards were not laborious and did not require more than 45 minutes to one hour of the participant’s time. During the second

interview, the vision boards were discussed and participants explained each element of their board. The vision boards served as another form of data to demonstrate imaginative variation (Creswell, 2014) of the phenomenon being described. Themes across each participants' vision boards contributed to the rich description of the overall essence—WOC collegians' experiences with leadership—defined and described in Chapters 4 and 5.

Time Commitment

The total maximum time commitment to participate in this study was approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes. This time reflected 2-60 minute interviews and 1- vision board that required approximately 45 minutes to complete. Several phenomenology studies in higher education have implemented a one or two-interview approach with a focus group and journaling (see Haber-Curran, 2013), or a photo elicitation assignment and reflection (see Rockenbach et al., 2012) in between interviews. These studies illustrated the usefulness of diverse data collection methods. They also served as a baseline to demonstrate that successful buy-in from participants to engage in multiple research activities could be achieved.

Risk, Benefits, & Confidentiality

There were minimal risks involved in participating in this study. Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants had the right to end their participation at any time without question or fault. Participants were informed prior to the study beginning that they would be asked questions about their childhood experiences, schooling, people who have influenced their life, their leadership experiences, their salient social identities (for example: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class) and how these identities have shaped their understanding of, and experience with leadership. Due the self-reflective and personal

nature of the study, participants were notified during the review of the consent to participate in research form (see Appendix E), that they might experience some discomfort in responding to some of the questions in the interviews. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms self-selected by participants in all written reports and documents, as well as by changing any identifiable contextual details (e.g., institution name or organization affiliations) of the participants.

As a participant in this study, individuals may discover this study provides them with a unique opportunity to reflect upon how they have come to learn, experience, and engage with leadership, and may guide their future engagement in leadership after college. The insights garnered from this study will contribute to the body of literature on college student leadership development and college student experiences in college. This study benefits society and the higher education community as it fills the gaps in literature on WOC college students and their leadership development needs. Examining how WOC students engage with and understand leadership can positively increase the representation of WOC leaders in society, by allowing their experiences to shape how leadership is understood and ultimately practiced.

Compensation

Recognizing the time commitment asked of participants, each participant was given a \$25 gift card from a retail vendor of their choice to thank them for participating in the study. The literature speaks to the effectiveness of monetary incentives to increase response rates in all types of surveys (Singer, Van Hoewyk, Gebler, Raghunathan, & McGonagle, 1999). Although some scholars consider incentives unethical, Grant and Sugarman (2004) found that “the use of incentives to recruit and retain research subjects is innocuous” (p. 717). Although unconditional

incentives (i.e., given prior to completing the research) are preferred, for this study gift cards were given to each participant after the second interview (Church, 1993; Goyder, 1994; Grant & Sugarman, 2004). The costs of these incentives were paid for by me personally. The risks, benefits, and confidentiality were covered in detail during the review of the consent to participate in research form.

Data Analysis

Data analysis allows the researcher to become intricately involved with the data of their study; observing, reflecting, thematizing, and ultimately attempting to find the answers to the research questions shaping the study (Merriam, 2009). The goal of phenomenological data analysis is to meaningfully transfigure the lived experience into a “textual expression of its essence” so that those reading it can experience it as if they also lived it (van Manen, 1997, p. 36). My job as a phenomenologist was to “direct the gaze toward the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations” (van Manen, 2007, p. 12)—to inspire and touch the reader affectively. To accomplish this, I conducted multiple stages of data analysis for this study, utilizing a combination of phenomenological techniques as outlined by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), Creswell (2013), and Moustakas (1994).

There is no one way to conduct phenomenological analyses. However, Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) offered a very detailed approach to conduct hermeneutic phenomenological data analyses through their six-stage approach. This compiled analysis approach reflected key phenomenological techniques used by several researchers including Titchen and McIntyre (1993) and van Manen (1997). The six-stages of data analysis as outlined by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007)

included: Immersion, Understanding, Abstraction, Synthesis and theme development, Illumination and illustration of phenomena, Integration and critique. I found their six-stage approach to be comprehensive and useful to aid in the analysis of this study's data, however I modified it for this study. For this study, I used stages one through five. The original stage 6, *Integration and critique*, was achieved through a peer auditor in stage 4. Each stage is explained below as I describe the specific data analysis procedures for this study.

Stage One: Immersion

In this first stage of data analysis, I immersed myself in the collected data: interview transcripts, audio recordings, vision boards, and field notes. I organized the data and conducted preliminary interpretations of the texts (van Manen, 1997). Immersion occurred in two phases, beginning with the first-round interview transcripts and field notes. For each interview, I completed field notes to reflect on my time with each participant. These field notes allowed me to document the rapport I had with each person and record any thoughts or questions I wanted to follow-up on in the second interview. Completing fields notes allowed me to practice critical *épochè*, situating my thoughts and emotions from the interview to more holistically understand the lived experiences being expressed through each participant.

The second phase of immersion involved reviewing the vision boards and interview two transcripts in which participants explained their vision boards. The written texts of the transcript provided context to the visual images reflected on the vision boards. Using field notes and interview two transcripts, I achieved more clarity on the vision boards to prepare for the next stage of the data analysis process—*Understanding*.

Stage Two: Understanding

In stage two of the data analysis process, I identified “first order constructs” that correlated to the research questions (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, p. 622; Titchen & McIntyre, 1993). First order constructs reflect participants’ direct words and ideas, and are extracted directly from the verbatim transcripts. First order constructs were identified from each participants’ first-round interview transcript. I established a color-coded key to better organize the research questions and the essences to be described. A total of five color-codes were used, reflecting each of the following: meaning making/understanding, experience/enactment with leadership, identity within leadership context, salient social identities, and environmental influences (on identity and leadership engagement). Using Microsoft (MS) Excel, I catalogued each participant’s first order constructs from the first interview. These first order constructs were used to inform the coding and identification of important constructs in the second interview and vision boards. Stage two as captured by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) is congruent with the process of horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), in which key statements and themes are identified from interview transcripts and participant reflections.

Stage Three: Abstraction

For each first order construct identified, I applied deeper meaning to render a second order construct. This second order construct reflected my personal interpretation of what the participant said and was grounded in the study’s theoretical frameworks (i.e., CRF, intersectionality, and positionality theories) and my personal understandings of the topic. Since electronic copies of the transcripts were used, I placed second order constructs in the margins as comments, directly linked to the first order construct in the written text. I then transferred each

second order construct to the MS Excel spread sheet so that both first and second order codes were side-by-side in one excel spread sheet. This allowed me to see overlap within and across participants so that I could group second order constructs to create ‘grand’ second order constructs. Because participants explained their vision boards in the second interview, and that interview was also transcribed, Stage two and three of the data analysis process were completed for the vision boards as well. These constructs were documented in a separate MS Excel worksheet and then integrated into a third worksheet with interview one constructs during *Stage Four: Synthesis and theme development*.

Stage Four: Synthesis and Theme Development

Second order constructs were pared down to render ‘grand’ constructs to begin theme development. In this stage, Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) posited, the researcher navigates the “hermeneutic circle,” continuously moving between the proposed themes, first order constructs, and the literature, to further define and clarify themes (p. 625). In addition to these elements, my hermeneutic circle included participant engagement to review preliminary themes. This practice aligns more with *Stage Six: Integration and Critique* (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). However, I believed it was critical to test and refine preliminary themes in a more iterative process. My peer auditor was given first and second order constructs as well as preliminary themes to review and give feedback. Since second order constructs and themes reflect my interpretations of the participants’ words, it was important to have a peer auditor in the hermeneutic circle to ensure the quality and applicability of each theme. Their feedback allowed me to reflect on the emerging interpretations of my participants’ lived experiences and encouraged deeper reflexivity to maintain the integrity of the analysis. A total of 135 second order ‘grand’ constructs were

identified across first-round interviews and vision boards. These were synthesized to render 12 emerging themes. After continuous engagement in the hermeneutic circle, a total of 9 final themes were established. These themes became the basis to illustrate the phenomenon of leadership for WOC collegians as demonstrated in *Stage five: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomenon*.

Stage Five: Illuminating and Illustrating the Phenomenon

The ultimate outcome of a phenomenological study is to create a textural description that reflects the essence, or heart, of an aspect of the lived experience (Creswell, 2013). When framed by a critical hermeneutic lens the goal becomes interpreting the lived experience in a way that challenges the status quo to ultimately affect change (Trede, Higgs, & Rothwell, 2009). When this methodological approach is coupled with the art of dialogue (i.e., the open exchange of thoughts, ideas, and perspectives through conversation; Costantino, 2008), critical transformative dialogues are created (Trede et al., 2009). Trede et al. (2009) defined critical transformative dialogue as a strategy used when engaging in hermeneutics, the interpretation of text, in which the “text author (the source of the text) and the text interpreter (the researcher) [are] engaged in a critical conversation” (p. 1). The outcome of this critical conversation is understanding, new knowledge, and emancipation (Habermas, 1984; Trede et al., 2009).

Given the limited insight known about the leadership experiences of collegiate WOC at private PWIs, I believed it was important to elevate their voices through dialogue. Critical transformative dialogue allowed for deeper understanding of their experiences and provided a platform to engage within and across difference. The voices of WOC are not always considered

in concert with one another. Through critical transformative dialogue, their stories were woven together to paint a bigger picture of how collegiate WOC experience leadership at private PWIs.

Hughes (1996) wrote:

It is time to begin listening to the voices of [marginalized] women, to discern the patterns of differences and commonalities in their experiences. Through thoughtful and sensitive attention to individual stories, we can enrich our understanding of the varied experience of women and the unique personal, cultural, and ethnic heritage they bring to leadership. (p. 478)

As the interpreter of texts (i.e., the mediums used to convey thoughts and ideas) for this study, I chose to construct a “creative nonfiction” (Caulley, 2008, p. 1), critical transformative dialogue to illustrate the phenomenon of leadership for WOC collegians. Nonfiction content written with fictional techniques, is at the heart of creative nonfiction (Caulley, 2008; Leavy, 2012). Creative nonfiction delivers a story of facts in a more creative way to promote deeper understanding and deeper reflection by the reader, “creating ‘me too’ moments” (Caulley, 2008; Leavy, 2012, p. 255). The use of creative nonfiction within social science research has been around for decades (Caulley, 2008). Leavy (2012) suggested utilizing fictional techniques to explicate nonfictional social science research, grounded in critical perspectives, allows for “raising critical consciousness, accessing hard-to-get-at dimensions of social life, extending public scholarship, opening up a multiplicity of meanings, building bridges across differences, unsettling stereotypes, and developing empathy and resonance as ways of knowing” (p. 254). When research is critical with a goal to disrupt the status quo, attention to these components are necessary.

The creative nonfiction critical transformative dialogue is presented as a sister circle. Sister circles are a type of focus group or support group (Niskodé-Dossett et al., 2011). With

roots in Black women's clubs and organizations, sister circles are a space in which WOC can engage in dialogue with one another, share their experiences, and draw support and encouragement from one another (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Niskodé-Dossett et al., 2011; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). Winkle-Wagner (2009) suggested that establishing sister circles "equalized power in the research process" and served as place where WOC were the majority and their voices were centered (p. 6). The equalization of power is important when approaching dialogue from a critical perspective, as it leads to "emancipatory knowledge" (Trede et al., 2009, p. 10). A sister circle is one approach to discover how knowledge and meaning are co-constructed for multiple participants (Miles et al., 2011).

Chapters 4 and 5 relay the findings from this study as a creative nonfiction sister circle dialogue. Although the sister circle dialogue did not actually occur, the conversations presented represents the texts collected throughout this study (i.e., interviews and vision boards) from each participant. Direct quotes (i.e., first order constructs) from interview transcripts, found in quotation marks throughout the dialogue, and excerpts from each vision board were placed in concert with one another to craft a cohesive dialogue between participants. As the researcher, I took creative license throughout the dialogue, providing content for dialogue transitions, the facilitator's script, and summative reflections, to better elucidate themes that emerged from the study. These texts are reflected through unquoted texts, *italics*, and [brackets]. The sister circle dialogue was moderated by a fictional WOC peer facilitator. Having a peer facilitator neutralized power between researcher and participant and allowed for a more uninhibited dialogue.

Delivering the findings via 'creative nonfiction' permitted a more organic critical and hermeneutic explication of the phenomenon of leadership for collegiate WOC. In addition, the

experiences of each WOC participant were triangulated to better reveal how they collectively engage with leadership in college. The textural and structural descriptions that comprised the dialogue provided a comprehensive description of the meaning and essence of leadership for WOC collegians attending private PWIs in the “Midwest City” area (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The next section reviews the exercises I employed to maintain the trustworthiness of this study.

Trustworthiness

The ability to conduct a meaningful qualitative study is predicated by the researcher’s commitment to ethical procedures and guidelines as well as their ability to establish trust with the study’s participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The trustworthiness of the findings for this study were ensured through several approaches. First, as mentioned in the data collection section, the data was collected in multiple forms, inclusive of demographic surveys, interviews, and a vision board. Multiple touch points with participants, in a variety of formats, allowed for data triangulation (Merriam, 2009). Due to the complex and often subjective nature of qualitative research, I conducted member checks at multiple stages of the data analysis process. This was done by presenting participants with interview transcripts and final themes and textural descriptions from *Stage 5* of data analysis (Merriam, 2009; Rockenbach et al., 2012).

In addition to participant member checks, I sought feedback from a WOC peer who, with her different lens, examined the preliminary findings of the study and provided essential feedback (described in Stage 4 of data analysis). My peer auditor identified as a cisgender Black woman who is a first-generation doctoral student. She has no affiliation with any of the institutions or the participants of the study. She has attended PWIs for both her undergraduate

and doctoral studies. She has over 9 years of student affairs professional experience and has worked directly with WOC at the various institutions, both PWIs and MSIs, for which she was employed. The benefit of utilizing a peer-auditor served as a check point to address any unacknowledged assumptions I had as I crafted the themes (Patton & Simmons, 2008). While not exhaustive, these practices safeguarded the trustworthiness of the findings.

Limitations

Attempting to study the collective experiences of WOC is an arduous task. There is so much diversity within racial and ethnic groups and even more when you explore multiple racial and ethnic groups. While this study focused on capturing the essence of leadership experienced by WOC collegians, some of the uniqueness within each racial/ethnic group represented was lost when explicating the essence of the phenomenon. Although the goal of this study was to obtain maximum variation to ensure representation of multiple racial and/or ethnic groups are achieved, the individuals that did participate do not reflect all members of their respective racial or ethnic social group. Therefore, caution should be taken when applying the findings of this study to other WOC collegians.

Finally, the study's participants were from a variety of four-year private PWIs in the "Midwest city" area. The institutions in this local area are predominately White. The experiences used to capture the essence of the phenomenon of leadership may not be comparable to WOC collegians who attend gender-specific or minority serving institutions (MSIs). Although not the focus of this study, the literature has shown that these institution types contribute positively toward WOC collegians identity and leadership development in college (Gasman & Hilton, 2012; Tidball et al., 1999; Wolf-Wendel, 2000; Zamani, 2003). While some of the experiences

may be shared, the gender-specific and cultural support offered at women's colleges and MSIs could significantly alter the experiences of WOC collegians and ultimately change the essence captured for the phenomenon in question.

For these reasons, women's colleges and MSIs were not included in this study. PWIs, institutions that are responsible for educating much of students in U.S. higher education (NCES, 2015), often exhibit chilly institutional climates, indicative of isolation and marginalization, towards WOC collegians (Esposito, 2011; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). This institutional climate directly informs the level of engagement WOC collegians have while in college (Esposito, 2011; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus & Harris, 2010; Quaye et al., 2015). Unique insights, revealed in the next two chapters, were garnered when WOC collegians' experiences with the phenomenon of leadership were situated in this institutional context (i.e., PWIs); an institutional context that still struggles to support this population.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

The process of reflexivity consists of critical self-reflection on behalf of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam, 2009; Olesen, 2011). Through this process, Merriam (2009) posited researchers "need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions" regarding the research being studied (p. 219). Sharing my positionality is important to fully understand the importance of reflexivity throughout this study. My positionality is multi-faceted, situating me in this research at both a professional and personal level. Professionally, I am unapologetic about my commitment to increase the scholarship on WOC in higher education. I have accepted the charge made by other WOC scholars in the field of education to "directly confront, unabashedly,

the social and educational needs of [Women] of [C]olor students” (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 12; Hill-Collins, 2014).

I came to this research topic with the desire to bring from the margins to the center WOC collegians, positioning them as a viable subject on which to theorize. I am situated within this study acknowledging that I too reside in the margins of society, with my perspectives often absent from the literature. As a WOC doctoral student, with eyes pressed toward the mark of becoming a critical scholar and faculty member in the field of leadership studies and higher education administration, I recognize how crucial this study is to the enhancement of practice. This positionality, while positive, could have introduced bias into the study as my strong commitment to enhancing the academy could have over-valued or under-valued the experiences being shared. If I did not engage in constant reflexivity, the quality of this study could have been compromised.

Personally, I acknowledge that the intersections of my social identities have influenced my work in the field of higher education and student affairs, and in turn, my work has influenced my own identity development. As a Black, cisgender, heterosexual, Christian WOC, with urban and suburban upbringings, I recognize that I hold privileged and marginalized social identities. With a study focused on discovering how social identities shape understandings of leadership, it was critical that I speak to my own multiple social identities. I also own that my perspectives and lived experiences might be shared, or vary greatly from the other WOC participating the study. While I reside in the margins alongside these WOC participants, the experiences of my Latina, Asian American, Multi-racial, and even other African American sisters may not always align. Rossman and Rallis (2010) considered this “simultaneous awareness of the self and other, and of

the interplay between the two” (p. 384). As I engaged in this project, I acknowledged my own standpoint to ensure that I honored both the similarities and the differences between participants and myself, and took caution to not privilege or silence any salient identities or experiences as I engaged with the data. By engaging in constant reflexivity, I balanced my passion for this topic with the voices shaping this study.

Épochè

In phenomenological studies, researchers must carefully scrutinize their own personal perspectives, biases, and assumptions to “bracket” or temporarily set them aside (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). This process is called *epochè*, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgement (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of *epochè* is to help researchers explain the phenomenon without imposing external or personal meanings to the participant’s experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Understandings of *epochè* vary, causing its use and application to be different depending on the researchers’ philosophical underpinnings. Some researchers like Moustakas (1994) align with the perspective of philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl who posited it is imperative to acknowledge biases and set them aside to examine the phenomenon in its purest form. Others resonate with the work of Giorgi (1989) who suggested, eliminating subjectivity is not necessary, rather being open to the views of the other is what matters. Finally, some scholars agree with the work of Bourdieu (2000) who viewed *epochè* more critically, noting the difficulties of setting aside ones’ personal assumptions and biases. Bourdieu (2000) described *epochè* as a part of the data analysis process, seeing it as a viable point from which to reflect and theorize.

However, Rockenbach et al. (2012) noted the tension between engaging in the process of *épochè* while having a constructivist epistemological viewpoint, that views realities as co-constructed and the “reflection of the intertwining subjectivities of researchers and participants” (p. 58). They suggested that the practice of *épochè* in its traditional and purest form can often take a positivist stance, with the researcher detached from the phenomenon, objectively examining it. Rockenbach et al. (2012) suggested that this approach contradicted the tenants of phenomenology that acknowledges the dualism of subjectivism and objectivism. The tension they described is substantiated by the critical stance some philosophers like Bourdieu (2000) believed should be taken when engaging in phenomenological research. Bourdieu (2000) posited that we must engage in an additional *épochè* if we believe that individuals co-construct their realities (Melançon, 2014). Bourdieu (2000) posited:

If we are to suggest that we collectively construct the world, we must also study how we construct the principles of this construction of the world, based on our social and political situation in this world, and based on how the State educates us and structures us, down to the schemes that allow us to perceive all aspects of reality. (p. 174)

By engaging more critically in *épochè*, we can better locate ourselves in “practical relationship to the world” (Melançon, 2014, p. 6). Once we see ourselves subjectively and objectively, and acknowledge our own social location within society and structures of power and privilege, can we then begin to analyze phenomena more holistically and in a manner, that benefits all (Melançon, 2014). As Cooper (1997) suggested, one’s biases should not be viewed as factors to be controlled to prevent altering the results, but should be “regarded as stimuli” whose impact should be observed (p. 559). Finlay (2009) agreed suggesting, researchers’ subjectivity be

placed in the foreground to name what belongs to the researcher and what belongs to the researched.

Throughout this study, I engaged in critical *épochè* to better understand how my positionality intersected with the participants' lived experiences and the social structures that bind both of our realities. I held myself accountable to the integrity of this study and to the WOC who entrusted their perspectives to me, by engaging in self-reflection, memo-writing, and maintaining a log of the study's history to maintain dependability and confirmability (i.e., audit trail; Merriam, 2009). These reflexive practices assisted me in maintaining honest engagement with the data to reflect the voice of participants accurately, and ensured my interpretation of their experiences were documented, coded, and interpreted correctly. Through these exercises, I continually attuned myself to lessen the threat of my own inherent biases I have developed in relation to how my social identities exist in the world. With the feedback and accountability from my peer auditor, as mentioned in the data analysis section, I guarded myself from hearing, seeing, reading, and presenting findings that conformed to my experiences, and instead concentrated on elevating the voice and perspectives of my participants (Jones et al., 2013).

Summary

In this chapter, I described the design of study conducted to examine how WOC collegians experience leadership at private PWIs. I explained how my critical-feminist constructivist epistemology influenced my approach to this research. Guided by my epistemological orientations, I provided a review of the qualitative methodology undergirding this study, critical hermeneutic phenomenology. Next, I explained the methods used to carry out this study, including descriptions of the study population, sampling, data collection, and data

analysis procedures, reviewed the methods employed to ensure trustworthiness, and finally explained the limitations of the study. I concluded the chapter with an explanation of the reflexive exercises utilized to lessen researcher bias along with a review of my positionality as a WOC scholar and researcher. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of this study as a critical transformative nonfiction dialogue. The participants for this study are introduced and the findings that emerged from the data analysis are shared. Through dialogue, the ‘essence’ of how WOC collegians experience and enact leadership at private PWIs is illuminated.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SISTER CIRCLE DIALOGUE

In this chapter, I present the findings of this study using ‘creative nonfiction’ (Caulley, 2008) critical transformative dialogue (Trede et al., 2009), in the form of a sister circle. The findings are presented in a cohesive scripted dialogue and organized by headings to reflect the major themes highlighted in that section of dialogue. The overarching research question for this study was: *Within the context of one’s multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?* After completing a comprehensive, multi-step data analysis process, as outlined in Chapter 3, a total of 9 grand themes emerged from over 135 unique second order abstractions. These nine grand themes guide the sister circle dialogue and are substantiated by sub-themes to provide more nuance. Images from participants’ vision boards that elucidated each theme, were compiled to create a composite vision board. See Appendix K.

The dialogue is separated into two scenes, separated by chapters. The first scene comprises Chapter 4 and is entitled, LeadHerShip in Real Life. This scene answers the following sub-research questions: *What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians’ understanding/enactment of leadership? How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?* WOC collegians were inspired to engage in leadership because of a lack of visual representation. Their hyper-awareness of social identities significantly shaped their leadership understanding and enactment. Engaging in leadership and

the campus environment in general often required navigating stereotypes and labels, and feeling like ‘outsiders within’. These chilly climates often required WOC collegians to code-switch by ‘putting forth a face that will pass’ and manage others’ impression. Strategic engagement through culturally-specific and gender-specific organizations was important to mitigate stereotypes and impression management. These seven themes are highlighted and further substantiated in the first scene of the dialogue.

The second scene entitled, Her ‘Vision’ of Leadership, comprises Chapter 5. This scene answers the following sub-research questions: *What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians’ understanding/enactment of leadership? What factors motivate WOC collegians to engage in leadership?* Two of the four themes presented in this chapter expound upon themes introduced in Chapter 4. Specifically, representation mattering and strategic leadership engagement. These two themes uncover the factors critical in shaping WOC’s enactment and motivation for leadership. The two new themes introduced in Chapter 5 are fluctuating leader and leadership efficacy and disruption of the leadership prototype. These four themes will emerge throughout the second scene of dialogue.

The sister circle dialogue opens with an overview of the setting in which the dialogue takes place. The dialogue begins with sister introductions and continues with an intimate discussion exploring each of the themes. Each chapter concludes with a journal reflection from the dialogue facilitator, recapping the conversation and the themes that emerged.

LeadHERship in Real Life

Dialogue Setting

This sister circle is comprised of college WOC who attend highly selective private PWIs of higher education in the Midwest City area. The women have come together for the annual city-wide collegiate WOC retreat held every fall. The retreat is a time for fellowship, reflection, and community between WOC. Each year there is a guiding theme for the retreat. This year's theme was 'The Colors of LeadHERship.' Over 30 WOC collegians embarked upon a weekend full of activities, conversation, and reflection on their experiences with leadership as a WOC at their respective PWIs. One of those activities was the sister circle dialogue. To foster more meaningful group processing in the sister circles, the retreat attendees were split into groups of 8 to 10. The proceeding sister circle dialogue captures the conversations of one of the sister circle clusters. This group was comprised of nine retreat attendees. The names used throughout the dialogue are pseudonyms selected by the women participants.

Because this was a space created by WOC for WOC, the sister circle dialogue was moderated by a WOC student scholar apart of the planning committee for the annual retreat. Olivia is a senior at her institution and has served on the WOC retreat planning committee for the past two years. She is majoring in sociology and has been trained to facilitate inner-group dialogues. She identifies as a Black cisgender woman. The dialogue opens with Olivia gathering the group of nine WOC collegians together in their assigned break-out room to begin the conversation.

Sister Introductions

Hey ladies! I hope the retreat has been treating you well thus far. *The ladies smiled and shook their heads in agreement.* Wonderful. I am so excited to be hanging out with you all this

evening. Our sister circle conversations are one of my favorite parts of the annual retreat. If this is your first retreat, you may be wondering what exactly is a ‘sister circle.’ *A few women nodded to confirm their confusion.* Well, sister circles are a type of focus group or support group. It has roots in Black women’s clubs and organizations from the 1950s and 60s’. Sister circles are a space where we can engage in dialogue with one another, share our experiences, and draw support and encouragement from one another, because “the struggle is real!”

Several Amens and giggles echoed in the room as all the ladies unanimously agreed with Olivia.

Great, so now that we know what it is, let’s get down to what exactly we will and will not do in this space. Since our theme for this year’s retreat is ‘The Colors of LeadHERship,’ this space is an opportunity for us to talk about our experiences with leadership as WOC college students attending private PWIs. *Because ‘that’ struggle really is REAL, one participant interjected.* Exactly! Because each of us has a unique background, multiple and intersecting social identities outside of being a WOC, different institutional affiliations, and diverse experiences with leadership, the retreat committee thought the sister circle dialogues would be a great opportunity to reflect, discuss, and share pieces of our lived experiences.

Due to the sensitive nature of our conversation I want us to collectively agree to respect the privacy of one another and hold in confidence what is shared in this sister circle. Please refrain from repeating or disclosing any information shared in this space with others. This is a safe space and any information shared in this space should remain here. Can we all agree to that?

There was a collective nod of affirmation and a verbal yes from each woman.

Wonderful. So, if we don’t have any questions, let’s jump right in.

The women were comfortably seated in lounge chairs in the break out room. They each looked at one another with anticipation and curiosity for what was to come of this dialogue. Olivia began to speak again.

Alrighty then. So, I know this is the second day of the retreat and some of you may have gotten to know each other better over the last 24 hours. But, since we are coming together for the first time as a group, I thought it would be helpful if each of us introduced ourselves. Just to mix things up, here is a fun prompt to get us started. If you had to introduce yourself by your salient social identities what would you say? Of course, tell us your name first, then feel free to share your major, classification, and maybe one or two, (because I know you all are super involved, I read your registration forms, *she chuckles*), things you're involved with on campus. You all look a little nervous, should I start?

The ladies shook their heads affirmatively.

Cool. So, as you know I am Olivia. I am a senior sociology major and I am scholar for the WOC organization that plans the annual city-wide retreat. If I had to introduce myself by my salient social identities, I would say "I am a God-fearing, proud and WOKE Afro-Caribbean Black woman."

Everyone chuckled at Olivia's emphasis on being woke.

So, who's got next? *Olivia asked.*

Everyone looked around with bashfulness waiting to see who would be brave enough to go after Olivia. Then, simultaneously, Isolde and Lisa started. They both stopped and looked at each other to see who would be first. Isolde began to speak again.

Okay, so I will go. My name is Isolde but you can call me Izzy. “I am Black and I’m bi-racial, my mother is White and my father is Black...I am a cis hetero, Black fem.” I’m a senior majoring in anthropology. In my last year, I’ve fallen back on my involvement, but I am on the executive board of my sorority; a Pan-Hellenic sorority. Definitely have a lot to say about that, but I digress, I’ll let Lisa go.

The other women smiled with curiosity and Stephanie smiled in agreement.

Hey wat’ up ya’ll, my name is Lisa. While I am a senior, me and this major thing have just been back and forth.

Everyone laughs.

Right now, I am majoring in psychology. I do community service and I am overly involved in my culturally-specific organization. If I had to give you a one liner of my social identities I would tell you, “Being a Black woman is the only thing that can categorize Lisa in a box...It’s an important identity for me because it’s all that people will see me as.”

Anna snapped her fingers in support of Lisa’s description.

And on that note, I think I wanna go next, Anna stated. Hi everyone, I’m Anna. “I’m a first-generation student of immigrant parents. My gender, mixed race, cultural identity, and linguistic identity—I speak 5 languages—really affects how I show up in spaces...I identify as a female, a woman.”

Wait, five languages? Someone interjected as Anna was speaking.

Anna smiled and continued to share,

I’m a second-year student majoring in physics and mathematics. I have this crazy notion that getting a MD/PhD is a good idea. *Everyone chuckles.* So, I’m a little overly involved, but

since Olivia said to narrow it down to one or two, I will just say, I have been involved in this Latinx community organization since the age of 8 and on campus I am a member of several culturally-specific groups.

Nadia jumps right in after Anna to introduce herself.

Hey everyone, I'm Nadia. I'm also a second-year student but I'm majoring in African Studies and the African Diaspora. Like many of you, I'm a student leader in a culturally-specific organization, and I also serve as an orientation leader and peer advisor. "One of my most important identities is being Black. I always say I'm Black first and then obviously secondly, the fact that I'm a woman. Those are probably the ones that I hold highest to me. I'm actually biracial."

Nadia and Izzy glance at one another and smile, sharing a silent moment as biracial Black women. The room has a unique energy as the women gain more interested in hearing everyone's identity introductions.

Roberta leans in to indicate she's got next. She continued,

Hey ladies. I'm super excited to be at the retreat and in this sister circle with each of you. I feel like we're going to have a dope conversation.

Everyone chuckles and nods their heads in agreement.

My name is Roberta,

Her name rolls off her tongue with perfect cultural accuracy.

"I'm an undocumented Woman of Color. I'm a brown woman, I am from a low-income background. I identify as Chicana. I'm a queer woman...being brown is something that's literally all over me. I cannot not be brown."

She put extra emphasis on CANNOT NOT BE BROWN.

Several women in the room called out “yasss” and snapped their fingers, resonating with what Roberta shared.

Roberta continued to speak,

I am a second-year, majoring in history and Women and Gender Studies, one of the many reasons I’m so ‘woke’. *Everyone laughs.* I am probably too involved on campus, but if I had to name two, I am the student representative for the board of trustees, and on the executive board of the women’s leadership organization at my campus.

The four women remaining looked at one another to see who would pick up after Roberta. They each smiled with apprehension.

Myka started to talk,

Hi everyone. My name is Myka. I’m also a second-year student and I’m majoring in political science, advertising, and public relations. Yeah, I know, I just couldn’t decide.

She laughs and the other women join in.

My main involvement on campus is serving on the executive board of my residence hall association and being a student advisor. If I had to introduce myself by my most important identities I would say, “I’m a Black woman [who] really love[s] my natural hair.”

All the Black ‘naturalistas’ in the room smiled as if to say, ‘me too.’

Ruby hopped in after Myka to introduce herself. She has a reserved demeanor and began to speak with a quiet tone,

Hi. My name is Ruby. I’m a junior majoring in special education. Like Anna, I’ve been involved in a different culturally-specific organization since the age of 10. I’ve held a number of

roles including being a coach, counselor, and recruiter. I'm not sure how I would introduce myself by my social identities.

Whatever comes to mind, *Olivia stated, to encourage Ruby to continue.*

Ruby added,

Well, "I'm the baby of four, that's probably shaped me a lot. [I'm] a Woman of Color, Latina, middle-classish, and female."

Great. Thanks Ruby, *Olivia stated.*

Olivia smiled and looked at the last two women out of nine to signal someone to introduce themselves next.

Stephanie decided to start.

Hi everyone. I'm Stephanie. I don't really have a one-liner but I guess I can share a couple of things that make up my important identities. So, "My grandparents are from the Philippines. I am a second-generation American. [I'm] cis-gendered, female, heterosexual, and I was raised Catholic. Filipino is kind of [my] ethnicity, usually [I] just [go by] Asian. [And I come from a] upper-middle class SES."

Stephanie looks at Izzy and continues to talk,

Like Izzy, I am a part of a Pan-Hellenic sorority serving on the executive board. I also love to sing so I am a part of my campuses' a cappella singing group. Oh, and I'm a junior majoring in biology and sociology on a pre-med track.

Anna smiles to hear someone else share her interest in going to medical school.

Olivia starts to speak after Stephanie finishes,

And last, but certainly not least, Marie!

Marie clears her throat as she's been quiet and in listening mood for the last 8 introductions.

Hello. My name is Marie and I am a second-year student majoring in history.

Roberta quietly says a drawn out "hey" to signal to Marie their joint interests in history.

Like a couple of you already shared, I too am very involved on my campus. But I'll share two. I am the president of a culturally-specific student group on campus and actively a part of my campuses' diversity project initiative.

"For me, in terms of identity, it's almost always been what is the most immediately recognizable thing. That's both my gender, because I am [a] cisgender [woman], and my race-my skin color...I've always identified as a Black female...Questioning, agnostic, lower middle class, are all those other layers."

After Marie finished talking, Olivia hopped back into the conversation to move the dialogue along.

Alrighty. Thanks again ladies for introducing yourselves and giving us a just a glimpse into who you are and what you're involved in on campus. I know it may have felt a little weird for some of you to share your salient social identities. You're probably thinking, how is this important to this conversation on leadership. If you recall, the theme of the conference is 'The Colors of LeadHerShip'. That was our fun play on words, *she chuckles*. But we really wanted to center all the activities, conversations, and session presentations on this idea of how our multiple and intersecting social identities impact how we learn, experience, and do leadership. So, that quick icebreaker introduction was a snapshot into what I hope we can talk about today in our sister circle.

The women shook their heads with understanding and affirmation.

Roberta began to speak before Olivia could continue,

I'm just wondering, *said Roberta*, are we going to talk about these collages we did earlier today?

Everyone looked at Olivia awaiting her reply.

Definitely. Thanks for asking Roberta. Your collages, or as we like to call them, vision boards, will most certainly be a part of our conversation today. Like I said earlier, everything you've done and will do at the retreat connects to the theme of exploring your identity as a Woman of Color with leadership. Your vision boards were a way for you to visually display the intersection of leadership and your identities.

Thanks Olivia, *Roberta replied*. I was really excited when we did them and was hoping we would get to talk about them at some point.

Olivia smiled and replied, Wonderful. *She continued to speak*,

So, you each just shared with all of us important aspects of your social identities. I guess a good starting point for our dialogue today should start with us just chatting about our social identities and how they manifest on campus and in our leadership.

Lisa chimed in laughing while saying, how long is this dialogue supposed to be? Clearly you want us to be here all night to unpack all of that!

The women in the room all laughed and nodded in agreement with Lisa that this would be a big task to unpack.

After calming her chuckle, Olivia replied,

I totally feel you Lisa, this is a lot to chat about with 9 women on top of that. But I know we have some amazing stories and unique insights that we could all learn from. Maybe let's start smaller. What inspired you to want to 'do' leadership and be involved at your campus?

Representation Matters: "If Not Me Then Who?"

For me, *Nadia begin to speak,*

"Being a Woman of Color at [my school] definitely pushed me to be involved with [student organizations] for Women of Color. That was the first thing I joined, obviously. Then my involvement in [the culturally specific organization]. Mainly because I was frustrated that I didn't see a lot of representation, not just being in a classroom and being maybe one or two of the only Black people in a space of like 20, 30 but also, I don't see myself reflected in the curriculum. I don't see myself reflected in the faculty... [while] I do feel like there are spaces on this campus for me as a Black woman...I don't really see a lot of Black women or Women of Color in general have leadership positions on campus."

All the women nodded their heads in agreement.

I agree Nadia, *said Marie. Marie continued,*

[Even on my campus,] "there aren't a lot of females of color particularly who are in a position of leadership." [I personally believe] "there are huge stressor[s] on us Women of Color regardless of whether we're in a leadership position or not, just in terms of what the standards of beauty that are being upheld at your institution are. Not only do you feel that you need to be defensive and on guard for any kind of racism, but you also need to be on guard for any kind of sexism. [But I realized, especially on a predominately White

campus and in predominately White organizations], being a Woman of Color matters, just in terms of my own representation being there. Knowing that there are other Women of Color around me, or knowing that there are not, that very much matters to me.”

Nadia and Marie, you two are speaking to me, *said Anna. Anna continued to speak,*

“It’s been rough, being at a predominately White institution, looking around, there are not a lot of people [that look like you] [But] “my mentality a lot of the time, I’ll just say, ‘Why not?’ I think it’s a good mentality to have, because if I don’t see anyone who looks like me in a space, I’ll say, ‘Why not me? Why shouldn’t I be in the space?’”

Yeah, *exhaled Ruby,*

“I hated it. I was going to transfer out, I hated being [at my school], I didn’t like it, I couldn’t make it home...a friend, mentor type partner who did [the Latinx community organization] with me, and she [goes] to [my] school, she told me to go on the Women of Color of retreat [at my school]. [After] my experience with the [WOC organization] I was done, I was here. That’s when [college] finally became my home and everything finally started falling into place.”

Hyper-Awareness of Social Identities

Olivia began to speak again,

Thanks ladies. So, some of you shared your ‘why’. I guess I wanna hear the ‘what’ now.

What has it been like doing leadership as a WOC at a PWI?

I’ll go, *said Anna.* It’s been a little daunting to say the least.

The other women smiled and there were a few verbal affirmations in agreement with Anna.

Anna continued,

“Achieving a leadership position on campus or really anywhere is a huge deal. My parents are like, ‘You have this responsibility on you. You have worked so hard for this’, which I understand, because as a Person of Color, it’s difficult to access that space. Once you access that space, it’s like you’re being watched. If you fail, it’s not necessarily that you failed but that all of your identities have failed with you. So, I take my leadership positions very seriously.”

You quickly realize your color sets you apart from others, *Nadia stated before continuing,*

“My experience being a Woman of Color being a leader on this campus ...I think that in a lot of ways it’s been very empowering to feel like I can represent other Women of Color on campus in these different leadership positions. But I think I’m still struggling trying to prove that I didn’t just get this position because I’m a Black woman and recognizing that it wasn’t my Blackness that got me this position...I earned this...I almost wish that my race was less visible in a sense, when it comes to how qualified I am for certain leadership positions.”

Olivia chimed in,

That’s deep Nadia. What would it mean to have your race be less visible?

Honestly, *Nadia paused before continuing,*

“it would allow me to be seen like less of an ‘other’. Me having my race visible, I think would eliminate some of the pre-conceived notions that people have of me, and some negative stereotypes or negative expectations they may have because of my skin tone. I think that it would make me more comfortable, because I think I would be less on edge about what someone is going to say next.”

Izzy added,

I agree Nadia. So, like we're both biracial and have lighter skin. Yes, "I have a lot of light skinned privilege and I know I have a lot of light skinned privilege."

She chuckled before continuing,

But we are Black, others see us as Black and contrary to popular belief, we can't pass for White.

Nadia shook her head in agreement with Izzy.

Exactly, exclaimed Nadia.

"My father is Black, my mom identifies as White...[but] because I had a little bit of color to me, nobody ever really saw me as biracial. I was always seen as Black. That's kind of what pushed me towards identifying as just being Black because I've been seen by others as Black so that's what pushed me, myself to identify as Black."

Izzy expressed her agreement with an affirmative head node. Nadia continued to share,

"My dad always...he laid it out for me. He said it's hard enough you're a woman but on top of that you are a Black woman so things are inherently always going to be maybe a little bit more challenging for you when it comes to [leadership]."

So yeah, I think it would be so much easier if I could just do this leadership thing and it not be about my race, but my abilities.

Marie decided to join the conversation. She continued by sharing,

"I guess, where I constantly feel like I have to be hyper aware and hyper vigilant is those areas in which I'm both Black and [female], which I'm very much outnumbered in terms of both gender and race...In those times, I just feel like it somehow becomes...not my job, but like I feel very hard pressed to not speak up when I see or hear things being said,

or see decisions aren't thinking of everyone on [my] campus, but rather a very specific [group of] people on this campus. That's why I feel like I need to speak up about it.

That's both tiring, but it's something that I've felt like if I'm not doing it, then there's no one else in this group who...no one else is going to do it."

To your point Nadia about proving you're more than your identities, *Marie continued,*

"whenever I've done any workshops on race or on privilege, I think both my identity as female and as a Black American come to the forefront of my mind...in a lot of those situations I often think, "Are people reading me solely as a Black person or a female, or a Black female, or are they reading me as someone who knows what they're talking about."

Social identities are a liability.

"Oh [mujer], I can go on about this." *Anna jumped into the conversation.* "I [believe] there's actually concrete liabilities that come with being a Latinx Woman of Color."

I agree Anna! Shoot, being a Woman of Color from any racial minority group is a liability. *Lisa added.*

Anna continued,

"I have to do twice the work to get half the credit, which I've definitely noticed [is] very true. I definitely noticed that. Part of reaching these...I mean, I feel very fortunate in that I'm part of these spaces that support me and encourage me to achieve leadership positions, but I've also noticed that achieving [a] leadership position is half the battle...Trying to navigate the system as a Woman of Color is incredibly difficult. I don't want to ask too many questions, because then I come off as needy, but this is also information I need to know."

Tell me about it, *said Lisa. She looked around the room before continuing,*

“Being a Black woman is more than just being a woman, honestly. Because we hold a double "x" on us, we are women and we are Black. We have a different battle than people around us don't share or have. Because we are deemed as being unintelligent, irate, and we are constantly hyper-sexualized.”

Exactly, Lisa! *Ruby said, then continued,*

“Being a woman is one thing, being a Woman of Color is a really different...A Woman of Color it's like when you're viewed as a female to begin with you're already less than a man, you make less than a man, you're not as capable as a man, you're not as strong whatever. Then when you throw in the Woman of Color and you throw in your race it's like an extra step down.”

Yeah, for me, *Nadia added,* “being a Woman of Color, I think just makes me more vulnerable to things that people say. Because of that identity, more things, more comments really hit home for me and really hurt me.”

Add on being undocumented and it gets real, *interjected Roberta.*

Roberta continued,

“So, when I claimed being undocumented, and then coming [to college] and being in all these leadership positions, it was surprising the rhetoric that surrounded [my accomplishments]. That I didn't deserve it, that I shouldn't have these positions. Like, why? Opportunities that I'm taking, people who saw me, interact with me every day, suddenly were very much against my existence.”

Roberta went on to share,

“[Navigating all of my social identities] is emotionally draining. It’s scary. It’s hard. [When others question my involvement] It feels so invalidating. It questions self-worth.”

I also feel like we’re expected to be soft or nurturing, *Anna stated. She continued,*

“I think the fact that, I’m a woman and I’ve been kind of cultivated in this community [where I’m] not surrounded by women leaders, [it] makes me more likely to compromise and understand where people are coming from...I think it probably makes me seem like a softer leader...I guess part of that is just that I am a less aggressive leader, which means I’m also more likely to be taken advantage of. Which is kind of annoying.”

Marie joined in on the discussion.

“There have been times when I’ve pushed myself harder in a group, because it was very much an all-male group...I felt my gender really mattered then. [Or, when I’ve been] more assertive when it comes to what my true opinions are...not assertive as in, ‘I’m pushing my opinion on you,’ as much as it’s, ‘I’m making myself clear.’ [I’ve found that I end up taking] on more than I needed to, because once I got a little more assertive, people felt, ‘Oh, well she’s doing this, she’s covered it. She’s the one finishing this, she can do it herself.’”

But the flip side to that assertiveness Marie is ‘bossiness,’ *Stephanie added.*

Stephanie further explained,

“Women in leadership, even if they are just a little demanding, people view that as bossy and negatively. Just because she’s a woman.” It’s a catch 22.

Picking up where Stephanie left off, Anna added,

“[Even more], a lot of times when I find myself in leadership positions, I’m surrounded by people who identify as men. There’s always that divide between me being a woman and them being men...I somehow become the nurturing one...It’s these weird gender norms that come up and at random times. It’s this weird divide, because I am a nurturing person. I do have Band-Aids on me generally, but I don’t think it’s fair for my co-leaders to expect that from me.”

I think for me, to your point Anna with gender norms, *Stephanie stated*, I feel like I’m also subjected to cultural/racial norms. “Being an Asian woman, sometimes I do feel like I should be polite about [things] and not pushy.”

Anna laughingly adds, Well Stephanie, as you know I’m a little bit of everything so I can relate.

Anna chuckles before continuing,

[It’s interesting], “being a Woman of Color in these spaces has especially been limiting, because the people that I interact with on various e-boards always expect me to be soft-spoken. When I’m not soft-spoken, they get confused that I have a voice.”

Marie chimed in,

I know we’ve mentioned sort of these liabilities with our race and gender. But, I’ve also felt like my socio-economic status is a liability, especially at this rich, private, White school.

Marie’s point resonated with several of the women.

Marie continued to share,

“There are certain things that I have to worry about that [high SES students] don’t. I have to worry about my student loans, and the financial aid, and making sure I’m doing a work study, and making sure that my grades are still good enough to get a scholarship or

whatever. [So] me being a Woman of Color, coming from a position of a disadvantage,” is always front and center and very much heavily on my mind when I think about my leadership roles and designing programs that could maybe equalize things a little bit more for other students.”

I can relate, *Anna responded.*

Anna continued,

“I’ll find some great opportunity or something, and then the first question my parents will ask is, ‘How much is it?’ which is a limiting thing that I’ve noticed that not a lot of my friends have to deal with. [Or if I can’t afford to participate or buy a book for instance], I have to have that extra conversation.”

Roberta chimed in,

Exactly Anna! Yes, we want to be involved and be these awesome leaders, but I don’t think the institution even consider things like cost.

Roberta continued to speak,

“As a mentor for my program, we get a \$50 stipend to take our mentees out, but what they don’t tell you is that you actually have to have the \$50 and then you get reimbursed. I do not have that to just have, so it’s really uncomfortable...I feel like I’m hindering the experience [of my mentees] because of my background and all of this stuff...Sometimes I’ve just given the money and I used to do that so much. I used to put my parents in such a difficult situation. The guilt is incredible. It’s guilt everywhere, guilt that I can’t give money, guilt that I put my parents in the situation.”

There was a moment of pause after Roberta finished speaking.

Olivia continued,

Thank you all for being so open and vulnerable. Being a WOC on our campuses isn't always easy so I appreciate you sharing. When I listen to each of you, I hear this frustration/annoyance with some of the things you all navigate being WOC on your campuses. What have been some of the other barriers you've had to work through or around while engaging in leadership?

Navigating Stereotypes and Labels

Not only are our identities a liability, they are stereotyped All. The. Time. *Lisa declared.*
You could hear snaps of affirmation and verbal 'yeses' from many of the women in the room.

The angry Black woman.

Lisa continued talking,

At least for me, and I'm sure many, if not all, of you can relate, I have to constantly navigate the stereotypes that others have about me. About my identities, about my abilities, every little thing that makes me different becomes questioned, or like we said earlier, a liability.

“[I recall] growing up with this [idea] that Black women are just loud and rambunctious. [So, I find myself] fighting this [stereotype]; you don't want to seem too loud and rambunctious. Trying to fight the stereotypes, but wondering why. Why do I even have to fight the stereotypes? Why is me being vocal deemed as me having an attitude... [I feel like] we're all seen as that angry, loud, bitchy Black chick...[and] we are seen that way because we are vocal...It's just, it's still feeling like I can't be me without, 'Oh my gosh she is just saying that because she is angry,' and that's the stereotype, I can't have emotion. I have to be a blank slate, but if I show too much emotion or not enough

emotion I'm deemed as rude and uncaring and insensitive or I'm deemed as crazy, blatantly obsessive over something that I'm just upset about."

Marie began to speak,

[It's for that exact reason you mentioned Lisa], "that I try to make sure even with how assertive as I can be, that I'm not being disrespectful or not being rude, because I think one thing as a Black female that you deal with a lot, is that stereotype of angry Black female. Or Black people are rude, or Black females are rude. That we're going to talk all over someone, that we're going to go straight to yelling, et cetera. I still hate that to some extent I feel the need to make sure that I'm not ever that."

"I experience [stereotypes] a lot." *Nadia added. She continued,*

"For a lot of Black students on campus, us caring about something...and trying to make these movements, do these demonstrations, is kind of downplayed to the fact that we're just trying to be like those 'Black power' kids...[like] the movie 'Dear White People.' [Like seriously, I think] people just see me as someone who's being very radical, 'the social justice warrior.'"

The ladies chuckled at the popular movie reference while shaking their heads in frustration.

Nadia continued,

"We did this activity to talk about being an ally with the orientation leaders...One of the questions was, 'How comfortable would you be attending a demonstration that we have, like for MIZZOU, this previous year?' They were like kind of in-between, middle to very comfortable and then there was a girl who said, 'I would go but I had class.' then I was

like, ‘Are you serious?’ Then a lot of people were looking at me like, ‘Oh dude, Oh my God.’ [Now] I’m like, I have to submit to the angry Black girl narrative.”

It really is hard when you’re viewed as a ‘fire starter’ for disrupting the status quo. *Izzy added.*

Izzy continued to share,

“That’s why I have ‘you are so resilient’ and this quote by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie about likeability on my vision board. [Chimamanda’s quote says, ‘what I want to say to young girls is forget about likeability.’] Which is something I’ve reminded myself a lot. I have [a] resting bitch face. I’m intimidating when you meet me. You add that in terms with how I interact with people and how [I’ve been implicitly labeled] the angry Black girl on my [sorority] board [and its gets challenging] ...Myself and a queer girl on [my sorority] board both realize[d] that other members of the board are [either] afraid of us or have labeled us. She is now the scary queer girl. I have been labeled as the angry Black girl, sometimes because of things that I [have] said. That is exhausting sometimes.”

I’m not exotic, I’m exhausted.

The conversation shifted gears a little as Nadia was interested in discussing the challenges that come with her mixed-race identity.

Nadia began to speak,

Part of these stereotypes, at least for me, is people viewing me as exotic or different.

“[I added this picture on my vision board it says] ‘I am not exotic, I am exhausted.’ I get that a lot, being biracial. A lot of times people will try to guess my race, guess my ethnicity. I’ve had people flat out tell me that I’m exotic. I think that’s centered a lot of the micro-aggressions I get, and a lot of times they’re in the spaces of leadership. It’s

very sad. One of the first things that people ask me when they first meet me is like, ‘So, are you mixed? What are you mixed with?’ Things like that. I’m like, why would you even...why does that matter?’”

OMG Nadia! I have had the same experience, *stated Anna.*

Anna continued,

“When people meet me, they have all these questions. They exoticize me, and I’m like, ‘Please don’t exoticize me. Just treat me as a human being.’ People are always curious to know about me without actually caring about where I’m from. There’ll be people who ask me about my story just because they’re curious, not because they want to actually understand me as a person.”

Curiosity is something else, *added Nadia. She continued,*

That’s why “I put ‘don’t touch my hair,’ [on my vision board] which kind of goes along with that, ‘I’m not exotic, I’m exhausted.’ [It’s] kind of the micro-aggressions that come with particularly Black hair, and people. Like [they’re curious, they’ll ask], ‘What do you mean that’s not your real hair?’ and wanting to dissect my [hair extensions], and I’m like, ‘No.’”

The ladies all let out a loud laugh.

Ruby continued by sharing,

I don’t know if I would consider it a stereotype per se but more of a mislabel. I’ve been called Mexican or Spanish when I’m neither.

“It’s a label that’s placed on me, that’s not who I am and many times people are like, ‘You’re Hispanic so it’s the same thing,’ and it’s not. Our dialects are very different, the

people are very different. We have a similar culture identity but being a Mexican and being Salvadorian and being Puerto Rican are completely different things.”

I speak Spanish I am not Spanish, there’s a difference. *Ruby exhaustively stated.*

I can relate, *said Stephanie. Stephanie continued to share,*

For me it’s “even the small things. Like when people say ‘Ni hao’ to me when I walk into a store. That happened to me [the other day at] Baskin Robbins. The server was like ‘Ni hao’. Are you like an immigrant? I’m like, I’m not even Chinese!”

Stephanie and the others let out a laugh. She continued,

“Those little things just kind of get to you and reminds me that [my race and gender] are the biggest parts of my identity.”

Sounds like we are all tired of being stereotyped, exoticized, mislabeled, and micro-aggressed, *Olivia added.*

Everyone nodded in agreement. There were collective exhales and looks of deep process and reflection on several of the women’s faces. Unpacking this topic was becoming emotionally charging for several of the women.

Doing Leadership as ‘Outsiders Within’

The token.

Nadia was still charged from talking a few minutes ago, and wanted to continue unpacking how minoritized social identities manifest on campus while doing leadership.

Nadia shared,

“[I’ve] definitely felt like a lot of times we’ll get a seat at the table just to say we have a Black woman at the table. I don’t think that we get a lot of these big, higher up leadership

roles, like the big ones, you know? I think that we more so get a spot at the table almost to be the representative and [the institution's] like, 'Hey, hey, we've got diversity.'"

Say more, *said Olivia*.

Nadia continued,

"When I was an orientation leader and kind of being a peer advisor, I think that we get spots in leadership positions but I feel like it's almost like a token Black person spot...there were like 40 of us. There were 2 Black women...Part of my expectations for those spaces though were that I would build community and make friendships and make connections and be close with people and things like that but I don't feel that as much...I felt like I just came from somewhere really different than a lot of the people involved in that and I felt I cared about different things. I just felt like I was commonly looked at as like an 'other' or as like you know, the token Black girl."

I know all about that 'token girl' identity, *said Roberta*.

The board of trustees for my school, which happens to be very White, for which I am one of few brown or female faces, "they tokenize the traditional aspects of diversity, so they tokenize the fact that I am an undocumented person, they tokenize the fact that I am a brown woman.

They tokenize [all] these aspects."

For me, *Anna added,*

"in spaces that aren't cultural-specific...I was secretary for a leadership initiative last year, and in spaces like that, I'm viewed more as 'just a Person of Color' instead of the huge intersections that come with that identity. That's a really interesting area for me. A gray area, because part of me wants to...I mean, I'm a package deal. I'm not just a Person

of Color. I have a color. Being in these spaces, they don't really prioritize what color you are. It's just the fact that you're a Person of Color."

Being 'the only' or one of a few minority students in predominately White organizations has it challenges, *Izzy added.*

She continued by sharing,

"[In one of my groups,] recruitment was very annoying because they wanted more minorities. So, I distinctly remember my group leader looking at me and being like we need more minorities, and I'm like OK, what am I supposed to do about that...it was kind of on me as like the one Black girl in that particular group to go find the other brown people, and that's a little screwed up."

Stephanie added,

"There [are] like twelve Panhellenic [organizations] on campus, which are like mostly White sororities. I decided to do the original thing instead of the Multicultural Greek because my mom and her friends from where we're from, a lot of our neighbors and friends are White, very well to do and they all went off to colleges. My best friend joined a sorority and I kind of still wanted to be part of that too. So, I went through recruitment and I guess it was kind of...I don't think that that was the biggest reason why I was rejected from some. But at the back of my mind I'm like 'is it because I'm not White' and rich that I am not part of their sorority. But the one I am in is very accepting and I think there's a push towards, a big push at [my school] towards diversity and inclusion."

Izzy chimed in,

To your point Stephanie about Pan-Hell organizations, “I chose to be in a White sorority and not a Black sorority because that’s where I thought I would fit in better. I’m not actually sure that was true, but it’s kind of too late now...I think I was just scared of begin in a Black sorority cuz I didn’t know what that would mean, cuz culturally, it’s not that I don’t identify with Black culture, I just don’t have as much in common with a lot of people who are more immersed in Black culture. So, I decided, because of peer pressure, because everyone else was doing it and once I got into that organization, I then started to realize that no one here gives two shits about brown people.”

We can talk about that ‘accepting’ part later Stephanie. *Izzy added.*

She looked across the circle over at Stephanie. Both women are in Pan Hellenic sororities at the same institution.

It’s frustrating, *Marie exhaustively stated before continuing,*

Sometimes when I’m the only Person/Woman of Color in a space there’s this “feeling of just not having a voice, not having presence, not being respected in their presence. [It feels like] their voice, and their words, their thoughts and ideas [are the only ones valued]. [I’ve] felt not being respected. When I’ve said something [it’s ignored but] someone else will say it later, [of] a different race or a different gender, then it [becomes] valid and a good idea. [For me,] it’s a constant question of, ‘am I being too aware [or sensitive] of my identities, is this really a discrimination thing? Or, is it that they genuinely didn’t hear me? Or was it just that they weren’t hearing me because they weren’t listening to me?’”

Oh, they hear you Marie, *said Lisa*. It's also difficult when you're either expected to speak for everyone that looks like you or you are 'correcting'/educating others, Lisa added.

Cultural gatekeeper/voice for POC.

Lisa continued,

"Every Black person on [my] campus, we all have to, we have to be the voice of our community at any given time."

Gosh, like that is so annoying, *added Nadia. She continued,*

"I don't think it's fair that I should have to be the spokesperson, because I'm not the spokesperson. Black people as a collective, we don't all think one way about certain issues. So, I don't know. I think that a lot of times when I'm in spaces where I'm the only Person of Color or Black person, it puts me in that position."

If it's not representing all POC, its helping folks know what's culturally appropriate. *Izzy stated.*

Izzy continued,

"I'm part of the predominantly White sororities on campus and I'm on the executive board. When we started, when I was on the board, there aren't many brown women in general in these sororities, there had been a lot of issues with people just being callously unaware of the people they were professing to be serving... [For example], "a sorority on campus's national philanthropy was a foundation that helps low income students learn how to read. They had something called a bail out where members of their sorority are put in like 'jail' and you have to bail them out with money and that money goes to the foundation. As part of their promotional projects, this is right after Orange is the New Black, a bunch of White Jewish girls dressed up in orange jumpsuits like they were in

prison, and used that as promotional material for their ‘Jail and Bail’. They didn’t see a problem with that. All of the minority students [on campus], people who might have parents in jail, or in prison saw a problem with it. My biggest problem with it was they were basically making fun of a culture that profoundly affects the students they’re raising money for and just didn’t think about it.”

The faces of the women in the room had the look of disappointment, frustration, and anger.

There were exasperations of ‘oh whoa!’ and ‘are you serious?’ permeating the room.

Izzy continued with her story sharing,

“So, I started in my chapter, something called the diversity and inclusion chair, and that person’s job was complicated because it basically relied on a person to volunteer to say, ‘I will be the social justice conscience of the chapter’...I was willing to do that, but I know a lot of people aren’t willing to do that. The cool thing was, and I don’t know if this was something they had already kind of been thinking about, but in the greater [Panhellenic association] structure every chapter got a diversity inclusion chair.”

Educating the majority.

That’s great Izzy, *said Lisa.*

Lisa continued,

I’m glad you were inspired to do that, but it gets so tiring and frustrating. “I have to literally teach [White people] about me, then I have to teach you how and why things upset me, and then teach you how your view is wrong. It’s too much teaching!”

I agree Lisa, *said Nadia.*

Nadia continued,

It's even hard when you become the 'bad person' because you try to correct or educate them. "It's still awkward for me to call someone out for saying something that is offensive to me, or a micro-aggression, because then a lot of people feel like they're being attacked. They withdraw from you and things like that."

Lisa added,

And of course, to prevent their 'withdrawal' or them feeling bad, "I have to tip-toe around, [asking] 'why do you feel this way.' I don't wanna tip-toe around. I'm not going to try to invalidate you, but I am going to call you out when you're wrong. So, doing that with people who are not of color is hard to do."

Izzy jumped back in the conversation,

The trade-off for us 'educatin others,' honestly, is folks don't even try anymore.

"Even though I have volunteered a lot of the time to explain things, people will just come [straight] to me to explain things, and I'm like, did you try to like figure this out on your own. I've told myself and opened myself up to being that person to explain those things. But it's annoying sometimes. [But] if me doing this now means someone doesn't have to do it later, I'm fine with it."

Izzy continued to share, it's interesting though, to your point Nadia about others feeling attacked,

"our [White] peers call themselves progressive and think that they are progressive, but there have been a lot of issues, push back...People don't want to feel like they're racist. They felt like the diversity inclusion chairs were basically reminding them that they were to some extent...the worry at least for me is [how] to keep [this] sustainable because there won't always be a me."

Exactly! *Nadia said, agreeing with Izzy.*

Nadia continued,

“[These] social justice conversation[s] can’t just be happening by Black people, or by the people who are being oppressed. It’s a conversation that has to involve everyone.”

Still not ‘enough’.

After Nadia finished her statement Anna proceeded to speak,

It’s funny because you would think that things would be easier and that you would feel right at home being a part of organizations that reflect your identities, but that’s not always the case.

Anna continued,

“I always find myself butting heads between my cultural identity, because like I said, I’ve always been too Asian for the Latinx community and too Latinx for the Asian community. Even when I try to show up in these cultural spaces, I’m always questioned...They’ll ask me, ‘What percentage are you?’...It’s hard enough to understand culture in the broadest sense of the word, but quantifying your culture is even worse. I’m not substantially any one thing, so that limits my access to cultural-specific spaces.”

I have an example for you all. So, “I’m really passionate about Filipino dancing. I joined the Filipino organization on campus, and I had this leadership position. I was like, ‘This is so great,’ but I didn’t feel at home in the Filipino organization, which was the roughest part for me. Technically, I’m not Filipino, but I’ve been involved in Filipino culture my whole life. I’m almost Filipino.”

Anna laughed out loud and continued to share,

“But showing up in that space, they didn’t see me as Filipino...it was like they thought that I didn’t have the same Person of Color experience. It was like they didn’t want to relate to me. It’s the constant struggle for [me]... [trying to] find your identity even when you don’t have the same kind of people around you.”

That’s interesting Anna, said Stephanie,

“[I’m a Filipina woman and] like I haven’t really met that many Filipino people here in general. So, that kind of makes me feel like almost isolated, but at the same time, like kind of just grouped into Asian-American woman.”

Myka continued the conversation adding,

“I went to this [culturally-specific org] meeting, and we were talking about Blackness. We were talking about things that were inside the box and outside the box. Inside the box means this makes you Black enough, and outside of the box makes you not Black enough. I don’t know. For some reason, I can only think of the things that wouldn’t make me Black enough.”

Izzy nodded her head in agreement with Myka.

Izzy stated,

“I got to college, I was still being told that I act like a White girl, that I talk like a White girl. Also, the Black community [at my school] is fairly small and [during my first-year] was not super good at reaching out necessarily. I already felt like, I know I’m Black, but I’m not normal Black, whatever that means. I’ve been told that I don’t fit in necessarily with the just Black community.”

It's definitely a struggle, *Anna added.*

Anna continued,

"I have friends who are Women of Color. None of my friends are mixed, so we've also had that boundary, where we're both People of Color but they don't necessarily understand my specific experience. I think the biggest thing between me and my friends is that since they don't understand my experience, they're kind of insensitive towards it, which is interesting because there's this idea that People of Color unify."

Olivia joined in on the discussion,

There is this saying, 'your skin folks aren't always your kin folks' have ya'll heard that one?

A few of the women nodded their heads affirmatively. Olivia explained for the others,

Basically, people who look like us, aren't always going to treat us like family or 'kin.' To your point, Anna about there being this idea or expectation that POC always unify.

Unfortunately, that's not always the case. It sounds like some of you ladies have had to negotiate your social identities and your leadership engagement in both predominately White spaces as well as culturally-specific spaces. We talked a lot about our identities as WOC and leaders on campus and just some of the stereotypes and labels that we mitigate daily. I'm wondering though, how are you all coping or 'surviving' the pressures that come with the hyper-awareness of your identities and your desire to 'do' leadership on campus?

Code-Switching: "Putting Forth a Face that Will Pass"

Roberta decided to share first.

Early we talked about how our social identities can be a liability. *She took a deep breath and continued,*

“I’m a very proud feminist woman, womanist maybe sometimes... it’s interesting, I’ve always know that I am a [bisexual] woman...I knew what that meant for me, but I just wasn’t out to anybody... [honestly] I just didn’t want to take on the baggage of what that would mean. Every identity, especially when it’s not the dominant, like the privileged identity, has an impact on the way that people perceive you. I just felt like I’m undocumented, I’m a brown woman, I am from a low-income background, [and] I identify as Chicana. [I had to ask myself] am I in a place emotionally to come into this identity?”

“I wondered how this new part of my identity [would affect] the way that people interact with me.” I didn’t wanna give people more to talk about. So, yeah, I concealed parts of me cuz I wasn’t in a place to deal with that baggage.

The women all nodded with understanding as Roberta spoke.

Myka continued by sharing,

“Someone told me about how there’s this thing called code switching...That term seems really interesting. I asked the person to explain it, and they did. I was like, that’s exactly what I do. My God, there’s a term for it. What? I switch between codes. That seems like I’m translating. It blew my mind...I definitely code-switch depending on the space I go in, and even though there’s a word for it, I was like, I think I shouldn’t have to code switch.”

Roberta added,

“Most of my life has been putting on a face that would pass and putting on appearances that would pass depending on the places I’m in...It is such an affluent college, the students might not always be, but for the most part [the school] has money. I can relate it most to my income because you feel the need to look like you’re not poor. I always felt like I had to be extra super-duper clean, I could never be dirty or else I would be [viewed] like the ‘dirty, little, poor Mexican girl,’ and all of these things.”

Anna chimed in,

“I’ll kind of shade part[s] of me [too]. When I hang out in Asian circles, I shade the part of me that’s Latino, because it’s easier for them to see me as one-dimensional.”

For me, Lisa added,

“it’s knowing that you won’t be accepted for who you are, no matter how you slice and dice it and turn it around; you have to be something that you’re not. You have to sell a part of yourself that you are not physically on a day to day basis. It’s like going to the grocery store, knowing that you wanted strawberries but getting blueberries because that’s what they’re selling. Instead of going to the store that actually sells strawberries because you want strawberries.”

That’s an interesting analogy Lisa, *said Olivia.*

With all my identities, I’m like the strawberry and the blueberry, a little pineapple too. *Anna added playfully.*

The women all let out a laugh at Anna’s play on Lisa’s analogy.

Anna continued to share,

“Navigating the system to me is kind of, part of it is highlighting the things about me that are different. I’m a woman, I’m a Woman of Color, I’m mixed, I have all these experiences that I’d love to share with the world. Only if someone would give me the chance. The other part of it is that I have to mute certain sides of me, because I need to be acceptable, to get past the gate keeper...It’s kind of like I need to mute some of my perspectives to make other people feel comfortable enough to give me the chance to have a platform...Sometimes I’m in spaces where, in order to get to that space, I have to shade who I am, but once I’m in that space, I can inspire other people to come to the space.”

I totally understand where you’re coming from Anna, *said Roberta.*

Roberta continued,

“I’m a student rep for the board of trustees and it’s like I’m two different people sometimes. It’s definitely the more traditional form of leadership.”

What do you mean when you say, ‘traditional form of leadership?’ *Olivia asked.*

Roberta responded to Olivia’s question by sharing,

So, like positional, big titles, hierarchical. It was clear to me I had little power. “In spaces like the administrative side of [the university] you are the student, you talk when you’re asked to speak. [The rhetoric is like,] ‘we are in charge, and now you must leave, and this is your title.’ All of these important people [are] donating all of this money. That’s why I felt like I couldn’t just be there and I was there in different ways. I felt like I was concealing a little bit. I’m outspoken and boisterous sometimes, and loud, and that’s okay. But, [in that space] I was so demure. [Saying things like], ‘Yes!’ Not speaking out of turn, [it felt so weird.] For sure I felt like I was concealing.”

To your point, Anna about making sure others after you have access, *Roberta continued,*

I temper my identity expression exactly for that reason. “Let’s say I’m too undocumented, what does that mean?”

She laughed, then continued to share,

“Not for me, for me I could never be, but for [the board of trustees] if I’m too undocumented, I could just not be taken back for the position next year, so what’s the security in that? ...If I go there, and I’m like me, and I’m this new version of what I consider the current version of myself, will they ever accept another person who holds some or all of my identities into this position again? Presenting myself in a way that says, ‘It’s okay to have more of us,’ and having to play it a little safe until eventually we’re all in there and they can’t do anything, but have us there. That’s long term.”

Managing Other’s Impressions—Aligning, Disrupting, and Perfecting

Stephanie began to speak,

When I hear each of you talk about concealing aspects of yourself, I think about how I’ve not necessarily concealed my identities, but I have carried myself in a way that aligned with other’s expectations of my identities.

Stephanie continued,

“Being an Asian woman, people are expecting me to be soft-spoken, quiet and nice. And for the most part I am so I don’t know if that’s me conforming to their expectation or if that’s really my identity, like if that is who I am. ‘Cause I think if I was the opposite, like very out there and that kind of stuff, people would be taken aback and think ‘oh this is

weird'. So sometimes it's just kind of easier to conform to their expectations and be that quiet, nice Asian woman; even if that means not taking that leadership position."

That's interesting Stephanie, because for me, it's the opposite. *Nadia stated.*

Nadia continued,

"I'm always very conscious of the way that others will perceive me based on their stereotypes. I think in a lot of cases, I'm always expecting the worst. I'm always expecting people to see me with stereotypes; I'm always on guard I guess would be a good way to put it. I think for me, my identity is biracial, but I identify as Black in leadership spaces. I don't want to seem like the angry Black woman, I don't want to do anything that would make people perceive me as 'ratchet' or 'ghetto.' I just feel like that would be a way for someone to, in a way, discredit me and the things that I say, and the things that I bring to the table. I always try and make sure that, it's kind of like a balance between trying to fit a certain image, so people won't perceive me as like, 'That Black girl.' But, also wanting to stay true to myself."

I find myself managing how I show up and present myself. Not so much concealing or aligning, but 'performing' to disrupt their perceptions.

Lisa jumped into the discussion,

So, for me, "I'm more aware of how I look, what I'm saying, the perception people get from what I'm saying [in predominately White organizations]. Versus when I'm in the [culturally-specific] office I don't have to be aware of what I look like, I can walk in looking like I just got out of bed and be completely fine. But it is a stigma when you have

to ‘be together.’ It comes down to being that ‘impressive, well-put-together Black person...It affects how I maneuver with them.”

Precisely, *stated Nadia. She continued to explain,*

“I [feel] that certain ways that I dress, certain ways that I wear my hair...parts of my culture as being a Black woman would be accepted in a space where it’s predominantly Black people but when it’s a space like more so the orientation leaders, things like that, it would just...if anything, just be seen as different or that it would bring a lot of attention to me...I don’t like to say things that could allow people to attach a lot of the stereotypes that they have about Black people to me.”

She paused before continuing,

“I’m almost hesitant to exhibit characteristics that are attached to Blackness because I don’t want people to see me as just that Black girl.”

Exactly Nadia! *said Myka,*

“I feel like people who don’t understand Blackness, people who are White, Asian, or of a different ethnicity feel like being Black is a stereotype [in general]. Then I feel like if I come off as, ‘I’m Black, and I’m proud,’ they’re going to think, ‘Oh, she’s just being this stereotypical Black person.’ I think that’s what I’m trying to avoid being the stereotypical Black person...I don’t want to be a stereotype. That’s silly, but I want to still be myself. I still want to be Black. I guess...I’m trying to figure out how can I be Black and be professional, Black professional, not just Black and professional or just professional, Black professional.”

Myka what do you mean ‘be Black and be professional’? Do you feel like those two things are not synonymous? *Olivia asked.*

Myka began to explain,

“In hall council, I feel like, since I’m in a leadership position, I should probably come off as a professional, in a way. I don’t know if that’s a good thing to come off as a professional or a bad thing, bad that I’m being professional and concealing my Blackness at the same time. That’s what I feel like I’m doing is putting on this professional face...I feel like whenever I’m trying to navigate a White space, I feel like I have to come professional in a way and come across as very serious and very like, ‘Oh, yeah, I know my stuff, and you’re not going to mess with me or try and call me out for anything.’”

To your point Myka, I too struggle with associating ‘professionalism’ with my blackness, *said Nadia.*

Nadia continued,

“I think a lot of times it’s representation in the media. I feel if you were watching a movie or a TV show and it’s in an office setting, I just feel like people would look a certain way. I feel like their hair wouldn’t look like mine and I also feel like it’s just...professionalism in a certain extent is just attached to whiteness.”

For me, Roberta added,

“A large part is still accepting myself, especially when everything around you teaches you, you don’t belong. You sit at a table and no one else looks like you, no one else has a similar story as you, and so you feel the need to lie.”

Unfortunately, said Nadia,

“[Negotiating how I show up in predominately White spaces] has hindered me from speaking up because I feel like a lot of people just won’t get it...it would kind of be like the angry Black woman narrative or people just wouldn’t resonate with that.”

Projecting perfection.

I think for me, part of managing other’s impressions of me stems from trying to be the perfect student leader. *Lisa stated.*

Lisa elaborated,

“I recently have been feeling the need to step down from my position currently on our e-board. Only because I’m not, mentally, I’m not dealing with some of my own personal issues because of the fact that I have...Like I said I put on a mask and I’m still trying to operate under this mask and [it] is slowly breaking down...A lot of that is taking a toll because as a leader people look up to you, you can’t crack. [Apparently, there is] this mythological list of how you are supposed to develop as a leader and your crack was supposed to happen before you became a leader. It’s just like you can’t crack under pressure.”

Lisa paused before continuing,

“You are not a born leader, all of this is taught and trained and instilled in you. [And guess what,] I’m not perfect, I’m not a perfect leader, I understand I may mess up, but like let me have my mistakes. I think that’s a big issue for Black women, they can’t make mistakes. It’s just really weird, I can’t explain society. But I think that’s partially why we are breaking down, it’s just hard to be this perfect emblem.”

Tears of frustration began to form in Lisa's eyes. Olivia handed her a tissue. She paused a little longer before continuing.

"I feel like my White counterparts are allowed/afforded that opportunity to be 'them'. Whereas we have to be a facade, all day. That plays with the psyche."

I'm sorry ya'll. I know I'm talking a lot, but this really makes me so mad. *Lisa added.*

The women collectively responded, 'it's okay, we understand'.

I definitely feel you Lisa, *Myka interjected.*

Myka continued,

"A couple weeks ago, I went to [this event sponsored by one of the National Pan Hellenic Council's sororities]. We were talking about how it's okay to be hurt. It's okay to not be strong. It's commonly portrayed, as Black women [that] we have to be strong. We have to hold our ground all the time. I feel like, as a Black woman, it's okay to be hurt by something. It's okay to cry. It's okay to make mistakes. I feel like that's really important for Black women as leaders, because no one has all the answers and it's okay to be wrong. That's how you learn how to be right later, or how to be better. I feel like accepting your failures or accepting your shortcomings just makes it easier to work in a group and make it so you avoid more mistakes later."

Olivia responded, that is such an important lesson for all of us Myka. Thank you for sharing.

Lisa finished up her thought sharing,

"I'm trying to be a better version of the persona that other people have of me. I have been living up to other people's expectations of me, when in reality, their expectations and perceptions have nothing to do with me at all. But, in the back of your mind it's still how

you see yourself; especially in college because you are going to do so many things.”

[Now,] “I feel like when it comes to appearance and how people who are not of color view me, it is what it is. You’re gonna get what you’re gonna get. Because I’ve gone my entire life continually trying to decipher what is appropriate. ‘I’m appropriate!’ That’s all that matters.”

I agree Lisa, *added Roberta.*

Roberta continued,

For me, I’ve just learned to “put myself in places where I don’t experience a lot of [impression management/passing] ... They’re safe places for me to be in and I don’t feel guilty choosing to be in safe spaces.”

Olivia stopped to check in with everyone to make sure they were feeling okay emotionally as the conversation made a few women upset. After gauging the pulse of the room, Olivia continued the dialogue.

Roberta mentioned ‘safe spaces’, *said Olivia.* What do some of those ‘safe spaces’ look like for each of you?

Strategic Leadership Engagement

Roberta jumped back in on the conversation since she mentioned ‘safe spaces’ first.

She shared,

“[The diversity and multicultural office on campus] I cannot get enough of that space.

Constant people, reaffirm, help, [and] support [you]. Just different spaces on campus, like

Women in Leadership. I think I’m very purposeful about the places in which I’m

involved, and then hold leadership positions in.”

For me, Nadia added,

“[I joined the culturally specific organization on campus because it] was a space where I felt people were going through similar things as me, people cared about similar things as I did and were going through similar experiences. I felt like that was more to gain a sense of community.”

I agree, said Myka,

“I really like meeting and connecting with other Black people on campus. I think that reflects my identity because other Black women have gone through some similar experiences that I’ve gone through. Some of them have gone through growing up in a predominantly White [neighborhoods], and some of them have grown up with talking proper, dealing with all those stereotypes. It’s nice to have someone who shares that similar narrative to you.”

Anna was eager to share so she went next,

For me, that ‘safe space’ has been the WOC student group on campus. “Before I joined [WOC student group] I had that motivational drive, but I didn’t really know how to interact with it on campus. Once I was empowered by these amazing Women of Color, I felt more confident in spaces outside of [the WOC student group]. Before I had that support system of Women of Color, I felt like I was alone on campus, but once I had friends who were encouraging me to take on these positions, because they were like, ‘You’re capable. You can do all of these things.’ Taking those words out of [that space] I was more ready to handle leadership positions in other organizations...When you’re

surrounded by people who take leadership seriously, who are actively trying to better the communities, you feel empowered to do the same.”

Stephanie added,

“You know [to your point Anna,] I kind of feel like having women only groups are actually helpful. For instance, like sororities, I mean they’re a whole bunch of stereotypes related to having an all women empowered group, but at the same it’s like kind of an open door for all females. Just like, you qualify for these positions essentially and there’s no men to take your spot, so why not just like run for the position and join the group? I myself have felt like more comfortable getting involved through leadership in those groups as well. I just feel like there’s more solidarity since we do have this identity and we’re all supportive of each other generally too.”

Ruby, quiet for most of the dialogue decided to share. She added,

Coming to college and being in a WOC student group “was the first time that I was proud to use [the term WOC] and I’m still am. It was just kind of like cementing my ideas about who I am and my peers and hearing about their stories and how a lot of them might be similar. [I found] a unity and the rightful use of that term...The [community organization I’ve been a part of since I was 10, also] helped me realize who I was as a person and what issues I feel very strongly about and the kind of people that I want to be surrounded with and that helped me choose my school.”

Olivia chimed in after Ruby finished,

And on that note, I think that’s a good break spot. Let’s take a 10-minute break and we’ll come back to wrap up our sister circle dialogue.

As the women left the room for break, Olivia sat down to right a note in her facilitator journal.

WOC City-Wide Retreat 2017

Sister Circle Dialogue

Part 1: LeadHerShip in Real Life

This sister circle dialogue has been eye-opening. Our conversations thus far have revealed the essence of leadership engagement as a WOC attending a PWI. Engaging in leadership at a PWI as a WOC was about much more than student involvement or community activism. For these women, leadership as a WOC attending a PWI was first and foremost about identity. The awareness, management, development, and receptiveness to identities, significantly shaped and influenced their experiences with leadership in college. The hyper-awareness of social identities and the potential liabilities that come along with those identities required WOC collegians to ‘put forth a face that would pass’ by code-switching and impression management, to navigate racial and/or gender stereotypes and labels. At times, they felt like ‘outsiders within.’ However, they remain motivated by strategically engaging in leadership spaces that were affirming and empowering. The final part of our dialogue is sure to be exciting as we wrap-up with an exploration of their ‘visions’ of leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

SISTER CIRCLE DIALOGUE-PART II

Her ‘Vision’ of Leadership

The break ended and everyone returned to the meeting room. The retreat attendees look a little drained, but there are conversations still buzzing from the first part of the dialogue. Olivia brings everyone back together to finish up.

Olivia begins to speak.

So, I know you all have been weaving your vision boards throughout the course of our conversation, but after looking at the boards during the break, I thought we should dedicate a little time to just explore these works of art. They are powerful ladies. Since our sister circle captures our collective voices, I thought it would be cool to create a composite vision board (see Appendix K), that would represent pieces of each individual vision board. It would be like our collective vision of leadership as WOC. *Olivia smiled.*

As you share key points on your personal vision board, I will incorporate that into our group composite vision board. Don’t worry, for those of you who sprinkled in things about your vision board in the first half of our conversation, I’ve already included them in our composite board.

Does that make sense? Olivia asked the group.

The women all gave a verbal affirmation.

Olivia continued,

How about we start with just a quick share about what your vision board represents for

you? Everyone doesn't have to share, but it would be great if we could hear from a couple of folks. Who would like to go first?

Stephanie began the conversation,

"I think mostly these [things on my board] are things I strive for. [They] help me really see [things] that I don't have a good handle on yet. [My vision board] for me, [is] an inspirational reminder of what I see in a leader and what I strive for."

Say more Stephanie, what are some of those things you strive for or don't have a good handle on yet, *asked Olivia.*

Stephanie continued to share,

"Yeah. [okay, so] like charisma, that's something that I really try to work on; being a likeable persona and inspiring other people as a leader. Then, [I have on my board the words] kindness and empathy. I think sometimes [these traits] go to the wayside [with leadership, but are important]. Strength and ambition are like signs of power and stuff, [and] also associated with leadership. In terms of like the quotes [I included on my board] some of those, those are just good reminders for myself to, don't be afraid to ask for help, or take initiative. You know sometimes you just forget."

Thanks Stephanie. You mention not being afraid to ask for help or take initiative. Are these things you feel you don't have a good handle on yet? *Olivia asked.*

Yeah, somewhat, *said Stephanie.*

Stephanie continued to share,

"[So, in one of my student groups] I have my own committee under me. But sometimes I just don't know what to talk about at [our] meetings. I get nervous asking my committee

to do something. and I kind of want to appear prepared and stuff like that but sometimes

I'm just not prepared and I think it shows when I try to talk to them and lead them."

So, feeling like you have to be prepared makes you not ask for help, sounds like it, *said Olivia.*

Exactly, *added Stephanie.* That's why my vision board has things on it that I hope to become better at doing as a leader. If I were to add a piece to the composite board, it would be the "don't be afraid to ask for help" image, just to remind me that I don't have to be superwoman and it's okay for others to help me.

My board, *said Roberta,*

"reflects what I need my leadership style to be. I need it to be brave, and I need it to be loving. I need it to be political, I need to be focused on justice." All those need to go on the composite board because they help define how I do this 'leadership thing.

"My vision board is like a visual pep-talk," *added Lisa.*

Oh! *said Olivia.*

Olivia continued,

That's a cool way to think about it. Like visual inspiration and encouragement?

Yup! Exactly. *Lisa replied,*

"The quotes and pictures that I picked encourage me to keep going forward. This one, 'I'm deliberate and afraid of nothing' reflects how I want to live my life and who I want to be."

Oh, we must include that one on the composite, *added Olivia.*

Myka joined in,

The items on my board reflect the “expectations that I have for myself as a leader, but also [the expectations I] have for other leaders that I look up to. Or other people who I encounter who also consider themselves as a student leader.”

Are there one or two expectations you think would be worth adding to our composite board Myka? *asked Olivia.*

Definitely, *Myka replied to Olivia.*

If I had to pick one I would include this picture with the hands and the quote about unity. *Myka continued,*

“I really like the image because I like how everyone’s hands are together and they’re kind of holding something up or just intertwined with each other. That’s how I kind of see unity, everyone being intertwined and there’s diversity in the picture, and having this diverse unity between all these people and everyone’s working for one common goal, regardless of how diverse everyone is. It’s pretty awesome...I feel like that’s the most important thing when I think of like leadership, is like unity and being united with those who you’re trying to guide, because if they’re not on the same page with you or you’re not on the same page as them, then it’s going to make it difficult to move forward and be productive and be progressive as a team.”

Great, thank you Myka, *said Olivia.*

I hate to be a ‘Debbie downer,’ *added Marie,*

“but [this vision board thing], I absolutely hated [doing] it. It wasn’t something that I really wanted to do. I don’t know if that’s because I didn’t want to see my thoughts and dreams actually put out there because there’s some form of realism that I [would] have to

acknowledge after that. I wasn't really sure why it was something I was dreading, and why it was something I didn't want to do. I just knew it was something I didn't want to do, but I did... [So, my journal, yes journal, because] "my thoughts change, people who I admire change. I'm in flux 24/7... [I wanted it to be] something I could keep coming back to, keep editing, keep adding to, [it] reflects people who I admire, people's who's work ethic inspires me, or makes me feel like this is what I should be aiming for in my life, or just someone who I may not be able to aim for it, but have been a damn good role model to try emulate anyway."

I like your journal concept Marie, *stated Izzy.*

Izzy continued,

"My board represents "leadership [as] a journey of self or self-discovery. All the times that I feel I started to engage in leadership I've grown as a person."

Representation Matters: "You Can't be What You Can't See"

Thanks for the quick inspiration overview ladies. What's really awesome is that several of you have images of influential women leaders, family members, peers, other women/POC on your vision boards. What do these individuals represent for you in terms of your vision of leadership? Are they a vision or reality?

Marie lead the conversation,

"[My entire 'vision journal' is WOC, from the past and present. From Maya Angelou to Solange and Beyoncé], every female [in my journal], forms their own independence and identity in a way that I would love to, in their own voice and their own agency...I think

it's great to look at people who've come up on top and say, 'If they can do it, I can do it.'”

If I had to pick a few of the WOC on my board for the composite, I would include Maya, Solonge, and Beyoncé because they are positive role-models for me as I strive to be a better leader.

This picture, *said Ruby*,

the one of the woman with like eight arms juggling so many things, “represents my mom, because my mom does a million things at once. I don't know how she does it, but she does it.” For me, she is my visual representation of possibility. I definitely want to have this picture on the composite board as a reminder that leaders aren't just these great men or high-profile people, but are like my mom who does a million things.

Lisa added,

“The Black women on [my vision board] is due to my self-growth at this point, because at one point in time I didn't think I was the most ideal person. I had a lot of self-identity issues and self-acceptance issues.”

Specifically, the image and quote with Amanda Stenberg must go on our composite board. It says, ‘my blackness does not inhibit me from being beautiful and intelligent. In fact, it is the reason I am beautiful and intelligent. And you cannot stop me.’ This quote reminds me that I am enough, and my Blackness is not a liability but an asset.

Shoot, I'm sure all of us can relate to that Lisa, *said Roberta*.

Roberta continued,

It is definitely hard not to think of your race as a liability or struggle to find beauty in your social identities. It's hard, especially "when you turn on a TV or when you open a magazine and you can't see yourself, what does that do for you?" I know for me it is disappointing and discouraging.

So, here's the thing, *said Izzy,*

"[I believe that] we're like told a lot that a White man named John is what a leader looks like...He's an executive...he's like pretty but not too pretty. Um, he knows how to talk to people...John is like the extroverted leader...he's capable because he's White. He's approachable because he is like kind of pretty but not too pretty...That's what I think about, if I'm being honest. It's like what I've been taught a leader looks like, a White man[with] a boring name...I know that's not what a leader is a lot of the time, I have a lot of examples to tell me that's not what a leader is a lot of the time, but, if you were to tell anybody else to think of a leader, I know that that's what they would think, and I know that's what I've been trained to think, and I can't help but think that. I try every day to not think like that, but that's how I automatically think."

'You better preach Izzy,' was loudly proclaimed by Lisa. The other ladies chuckled and snapped their fingers in agreement with Izzy's assessment and Lisa's praise.

Myka continued the conversation,

"It just seems like, in our society today, you have persons at the top of the totem pole, the White males, and then you have a Woman of Color...I don't want to say down there, but it would be like that in another setting. It would be obvious I would have less power because I'm not this White male. I'm just a Black female, and it's unfortunate."

Olivia chimed in,

For the record, it is not unfortunate that WE are Black women, what IS unfortunate is the system, and how our identities are not afforded the same power and access as our White counterparts. Now that's unfortunate!

The women all snapped their fingers and verbal 'yeses' echoed in the room.

Myka continued to speak,

That's kind of why I have this picture of the Black woman standing in front of everyone else. It's a reminder that Black women are leaders too and should not be in the peripheral. "I would've loved to see more People of Color just be like the...I shouldn't say important heads, but like, being in those top positions. I would love to see that."

Let's add this to the composite board too, *she chuckled.*

I agree Myka, and I feel you Olivia, the system is jacked up, *Roberta added.*

Roberta continued to share,

"[This was] how leadership was explained to me when I was little. You can be the line leader, but if Billy wants to do it, he will eventually get it. Or you can be a line leader, but you can't correct certain people. I saw that reflected both at school and then at home."

Let's include this picture of the little boy on our composite board. He can be 'Billy' or 'John'.

Roberta chuckled as she glanced over to Izzy.

This will be a reminder to us all of those jacked up lessons about leadership that excluded us as WOC.

Exactly, *said Stephanie,*

“Very few women growing up I’ve met, have even had leadership roles. So, when someone finally does, it’s like ‘whoa’. I don’t know, it’s kind of unheard of for any of my mom’s friends to be CEO of anything or anything other than a housewife. So then when I finally see it, it’s weird because you’re not expecting a woman in power.”

Nadia, nodding her head in agreement with Stephanie, continued by adding,

“[For me], when I think of leadership, the [image from the movie] Toy Story [with the quote] ‘Patriarchy. Patriarchy everywhere’ with the picture of mount Rushmore next to it with all these old dead White men, represents what we view as leaders. I think a lot of times, looking at leadership that is something predominately controlled by White men. This country was made for White men, so I think that the ‘patriarchy’ has a lot to do with leadership and women trying to get a seat at the table that has always pretty much been dominated by men.”

That’s powerful Nadia, *added Olivia*. We are definitely adding those two pictures to the composite.

Precisely, *Izzy stated, she continued,*

“So, John is nowhere on this board for a specific reason. I think part of the journey aspect is I know that I have these biases that are built in. There aren’t many if any White women on this board. Not because I don’t think of White women as leaders, but because I have been actively trying to redefine, not redefine but actively think about leadership in terms of my social identity. It might seem a little heavy handed. I think that specifically thinking about leadership in terms of being an African-American woman, which this board is or being a brown woman, I think is a better way to put that, is important because

I have so many things telling me that being a leader is having a penis and probably being White. Straightening your hair when you go to that corporate board meeting or other things like that. I think this board is personally aspirational. Things that I would like to be, that I would like to embody as well as things that I believe.”

That’s why I have this image of Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* book. It reminds me how we as WOC are not always included in leadership.

Stephanie chimed in,

To your point, Izzy, about not thinking about leadership as White men, “I chose the young Hilary Clinton, as a reminder that you don’t have to be really good looking when you’re young, you know. [You can] still turn into this very powerful person and be successful. You don’t have to be a beautiful Lucy Liu to be successful... Well, I mean whenever you think of successful people they’re always beautiful. That for me has always been a huge, you know, confidence issue. Self-confidence issue. She’s like a good reminder that you can wear giant, ugly glasses and still be a presidential candidate, years from now.”

For their inspiration, I think they deserve a spot on the composite board.

After Stephanie finished her thought, Olivia began to speak,

Clearly, we ‘envision’ leadership to be these powerful WOC. But as you’ve just shared, the reality is that WOC leaders are not the prototype (i.e., standard). Even more, when we look at things on a college level, from what we talked about earlier, WOC are still ‘the only one’ or one of few. Is it hard to call yourself something that you don’t see? Are you reflected on the board?

You all said you ‘do’ leadership and are involved on campus, but do you consider yourself a leader?

Fluctuating Leader/Leadership Self-Efficacy

Is that a trick question? *Anna asked.*

The women collectively laughed.

Anna continued to speak,

“I have leadership positions on campus but I don’t necessarily feel like a leader. I don’t know, I’ll have all these responsibilities and I’m always busy and I’m doing all these things but I don’t feel that puts me on a different level than any of my peers.”

Okay, so remember ‘John’? *Izzy asked the group. She paused then continued,*

“[Yeah so,] ‘John’ knows he’s a leader and he is like very prepared to fulfill his role as a leader. I don’t necessarily always feel prepared to fulfill my role as a leader. I’m a leader because I saw a hole in the community that I was in that I wanted filled, so I decided to fill it. I do it because I care about it, not because I’m super confident in my abilities, but if I think I can’t do something I’ll find someone who can do something.”

Nadia jumped in adding, I believe I’m a leader so I actually did include myself on my board.

“My dad always instilled in me, have integrity, do what you can to support the people that you care about. You can do pretty much whatever you want, it’s not about being a woman. Sometimes it will be about being Black and you should be aware that you’re a woman, but just because you are a woman doesn’t mean you can’t be a leader.”

That’s nice encouragement from your dad Nadia, *said Stephanie.*

Unfortunately, *she added,*

“I don’t usually think of myself as a leader. Cuz, I mean I’m a pretty quiet person and I’m usually someone who will do things for herself rather than delegate them.”

Like I said earlier, I’m still working on asking others for help. *Stephanie chuckles.*

Stephanie, sounds like you were also taught that “leaders are the ones who step up, and smile and they’re very loud.” *Izzy responded.*

Izzy continued,

“But, in my experience, not all the leaders I know, [including myself] are like that.”

Exactly Izzy, *said Roberta,*

“You don’t have to be the loudest person in the room, your presence carries weight. You just existing in a space is political.”

We can always count on Roberta for these powerful quotes, *Anna stated to the room.*

Everyone chuckled in agreement.

Marie decided to share her feelings.

Marie began to speak,

So, I’m ‘doing’ leadership, but if I’m being honest, “I thought I would feel a lot more secure in my leadership positions, and in my position in [my] organizations that I do...[but] I’m absolutely terrified of the year to come, and what I’m doing.” That’s why I included words like ‘brave, mindful, and impactful’ on my board to encourage me as I strive to feel more secure in my leadership positions.

It will be okay Marie, *said Lisa.* You’ve got this. Black Girl Magic is on my board for a reason. Let’s go ahead and add that to the composite board Olivia, *Lisa said.*

As she smiled at Marie, Lisa continued to share,

“A year ago, I would have never said I was a leader...I talk to people, I engage, I have a strong voice, I never thought in a million years that’s what I was doing...I did not think at all that I was even somewhat resembling a leader; cuz I’m thinking, people are not gonna follow me, do people really listen to me. But in actuality, people are listening to me. I didn’t know it.”

Roberta added,

“I think everyone is a leader, I think I am a leader, but somehow usually when people say that to me, whether [on campus] or at home, they are still referring back to a traditional version of a leader. That’s just not something that I identify with anymore.”

Doing Leadership Her Way: Disrupting the Leadership Prototype

Thanks ladies, *said Olivia.*

Olivia continued to speak,

Roberta, you shared that the traditional version of a leader is just not something you identify with anymore. So, what exactly does it look like? How would you all define leadership for you?

Roberta responded to Olivia’s question by sharing,

“If you asked me to describe my leadership style now it would be like water [the blue waves on my vision board are supposed to reflect water]. So, like I sense the room out, this is my team, so you’re strong in this, you’re strong in this, where’s our weak point? I think I can fill that, and I fill in the holes...It just happened so organically. I didn’t have to overcompensate. I was just enough. What I was bringing to the table was enough, it didn’t need to be more and it didn’t need to be less, I just needed to exist.”

Anna continued, sharing,

“for me, leadership would be defined as purposeful action...because I don’t think there’s only one way to be a leader.”

Definitely, *Anna, said Myka. When you stated, ‘purposeful action’ I kinda hear activism.*

Yeah, I can see how that fits, *Anna responded.*

Myka continued,

“I feel like activism is definitely a form of leadership...You have to be active. You can’t wait for change to happen. You have to take an initiative to make change happen and take initiative to help people who are being oppressed or shortchanged by the system. I see it in a leadership way because you’re taking that initiative, and most leaders have to take an initiative and make the first decision before other decisions can be made to improve a situation.”

Nadia added,

I agree, too bad my peers on campus don’t value mine and other SOC’s activism as leadership. Don’t forget, we are the ‘social justice warriors/Black power kids.’

The group laughed, remembering their conversation earlier about being the cultural gatekeeper as a SOC.

Nadia continued,

“I prefer to look at leadership in a smaller sense and the smaller, kind of everyday impact.”

I agree, *said Marie.*

Marie continued,

“I don’t think necessarily to be a leader you have to hold the title of leadership. I think there’s something to be said for people who are not in a position of power, but who essentially are the power. Who essentially are the people who are motivating, who are keeping the place going. I think there needs to be acknowledgement for the fact that is the true leadership, even if you don’t hold the position of president or whatever.”

The quote by Shirley Chisholm reminds me of this, she says “I am and always will be a catalyst for change.” I think I will include that on the composite board, *Marie added.*

After those who wanted to share finished, Olivia followed up with her next question.

It sounds like you all are figuring out how to stay involved and engage in leadership even in the midst of it all. So, what keeps you committed to the cause? What is your motivation to engage in leadership?

Strategic Leadership Engagement: ‘My Presence is an Act of Resistance’

Elevate the voices of WOC.

Because my voice, our voice needs to be heard, *proclaimed Nadia.*

She continued speaking,

“It feels good to be a Black woman, [to] be in these positions and be able to be in [predominately White spaces] and have a voice...my position as an orientation leader and a peer advisor, has become a platform or a way for me to do other big things. A lot of times they’ll send resources to us to like be a part of a certain position in student government or things like that. Then it’s also allowed me to connect with some higher up faculty and talk to them about some of the issues that I’ve seen being Black on campus or things like that.”

Precisely, *said Lisa,*

“Being a student leader in [predominately White] spaces is different than being part of [culturally-specific groups] only because I don’t feel like I have to fight as hard to be heard or understood. When you’re in a culturally specific group, everyone is the same, your voice kind of blends in. [If] I’m the only Black girl in whatever, my voice can’t blend in. It doesn’t sound like anyone else’s. I don’t have to fight to be heard, cuz you’re gonna hear me.”

Marie began to speak. She shared,

I know we talked about this at the very beginning of our dialogue but,

“I always feel a need as a Woman of Color to lead or to make sure that you understand that I’m still here. I’m still someone you need to be listening to...I’ve always had my voice. It’s never really been a struggle...Even if I didn’t know what my voice was, what it was I believed in, you can bet that I was going to be talking about something to someone. Giving my opinion. I’ve always felt the need that my opinion should be heard, and if you’re being heard, why shouldn’t I be heard.”

Olivia added,

That reminds me of the quote you have on your board Marie, by Saul Williams, it says “I’m a candle. Chop my neck a million times, I still burn bright and stand.”

That’s really powerful, *Ruby stated,* I think we should add it to the composite board as well.

I agree, *said Olivia.*

Disrupting the status quo.

Roberta joined in on the discussion adding,

I'm motivated to stay engaged because things need to change on my campus. I take pleasure in shaking things up.

Roberta chuckled before continuing,

"I'm [the] education chair for Women in Leadership [organization on campus], and it's an upper middle class White women's space that I was like, 'Not for long.' They have some really cool resources that I think a lot of people could benefit from. I was like, 'I'm going to restructure this whole thing, got to start over. Let's blow it up and we got to start over.'"

There were several affirmative head nods, finger snaps, and 'yesses' supporting Roberta's strategic access

Roberta continued,

"I was used to being in spaces where I was the only brown person or one of the few. I had no problem running for the e-board at the end of my first semester because I was used to that feeling. I forced some of my friends to stay, I'd force my friends to run. The e-board before us was all White women and [now] this e-board is [several] Women of Color, our president and then there's two more Women of Color holding e-board positions, like me another friend, so now it's different. With that power then I was able to raise the question, what can we do to make this space more welcoming?"

Empowerment for other SOC.

For me, *said Ruby*, I 'do' leadership because to me leadership is about "making a difference and inspiring others to do the same."

I feel you Ruby, *said Myka*.

Myka continued,

“I just love Michelle Obama. [On my vision board, I have a picture and quote by her.] I really like this quote: ‘Success isn’t about how much money you make. It’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.’ I feel like that’s important to me as a leader, because if I can make a difference in someone’s life, then I feel like I’ve done my job at the end of the day. Because, what made me change my ideas as a leader was how other people would make differences in my life, and that’s what changed me. So, I’m hoping to make a difference in someone else’s life and help them realize or come to a revelation and help them change for the better.”

We MUST include First Lady Michelle Obama on the composite board, *Lisa proclaimed.*

Everyone agreed with nods and yeses.

It’s all about empowerment, *said Roberta.*

Roberta continued,

“When I go into spaces and I see people who are similar, and the development of coming into your brown-ness, I’m like, ‘I was there. I feel you.’ I’m still kind of getting, and accepting [myself] more and more each day, but I can be like ‘Okay, you’re going to get there.’ [When] I see them growing, that helps me be a better mentor, or resource to whoever needs. Even just as a leader, to be able to lead by existing sometimes, I think it is really important. Showing them that it’s cool to just be brown sometimes.”

It was important for me to include words like ‘Chicanx’ and ‘assistance’ to capture the importance of empowering other POC.

Shall we add that to the composite board Roberta, *asked Olivia.*

Definitely, *responded Roberta.*

That ‘brown empowerment’ is the truth! *Myka proclaimed.*

Myka continued by sharing,

“I feel like some of the clubs I go to, there are other People of Color there. They look to me like, ‘Oh, she’s doing something for us,’...I want other people in my community to be as empowered and feel as assertive and as strong as I do now because I know what it’s like not to feel like that. I feel like it’s my duty to be in a position like that, that advocates for people of my community, both the women and the Black community and minority community.”

I agree Myka, *said Anna. She continued,*

I’ve realized how I’ve become a role model and through my involvement I’ve empowered others. “That’s kinda why I also included a picture of my sister and I at a beauty pageant. We were pageant girls at one point. This resonated with me for leadership because like I said, my vision of leadership is role models. With these pageants, younger girls would be so excited because I was wearing a dress and a crown. They aspired to be me, which I was flattered by, but I also wanted them to aspire to be more.”

Have ya’ll read this poem by Rupi Kaur apologizing to every girl? *Anna asked the room.*

A few women had heard the poem and nodded affirmatively. Anna continued,

“[The poem] it’s like, “I want to apologize to every girl who I’ve called beautiful before calling her extraordinary? Oh my God it’s such a good poem!” *Anna proclaimed.*

My paraphrase just doesn’t do the poem justice, let me read the full poem quickly because it is so powerful. *Anna began to recite the poem from her vision board,*

“I want to apologize to all the women I have called pretty before I’ve called them intelligent or brave. I am sorry I made it sound as though something as simple as what you’re born with is the most you have to be proud of when your spirit has crushed mountains. From now on, I will say things like, you are resilient, or, you are extraordinary. Not because I don’t think you’re pretty, but because you are so much more than that.”

I included it on my vision board, and I would love to add it to the composite board, *Anna stated.*
Anna continued to share,

“but that’s kind of how I felt. Of course, I want every girl to feel beautiful and extraordinary, if you want to be the next pageant queen, great. But I also want them to want more.”

That is a beautiful poem Anna, *said Olivia.* Thank you for sharing.

Lisa wanted to add to Anna’s point about being a role model. She continued the discussion adding,

I agree Anna. It’s so amazing to me how inspirational you can be for others as a WOC leader. The same way those little girls looked up to you Anna, “I realized how much I became a role model for others once I became a student leader on campus.”

Nadia joined in,

“I wanted to [be an orientation leader] because I wanted to have a way where I could connect with students who were having some of the same...particular issues as I was. I can’t even count on my fingers the amount of times where I met a Student of Color during orientation, they were like, not terrified but they were like...what do they have here for People of Color?”

I’m involved, said Marie,

“[because] it’s always been what I’m interested in, it’s always been something I felt was a good use of my time, because if I could help someone else feeling a little more comforted coming into school, if I could maybe provide someone else an area to talk about the things that they’re really talking about. People looked up to me, I want to do that as much as possible.”

Izzy picked up after Marie. She shared,

“I’m really involved in the White community [on campus] for the girls like me who are definitely Black and we know that we’re Black, but like we’re not one type of Black...[but] we feel [more] comfortable [in predominately White spaces, like my Pan Hellenic sorority], but we don’t feel completely comfortable. We still feel like we’re not being serviced and being valued, and being acknowledged. I think that we should be because there are brown women in [my sorority] who have really good things to say and are really amazing.”

Encouraging others is so important, Anna added,

“[The diversity and multicultural department on campus] invited me to speak at this panel to give advice to the first-year students. I remember being so flattered I was like, ‘Really?

You want me to talk to them? What?’...I knew that the whole point of it was kind of just to inspire first year students to be empowered to take on those roles on campus. The fact that we have to constantly validate the colored voice makes me sad but I also appreciate that. While I was on this panel, I was like, ‘Wow, my voice actually matters.’ As I was telling everyone else that they’re voice mattered.”

“Paying it forward”: My access insures their access.

Izzy began to speak first.

In addition to just like being a source of empowerment for others who look like me, I’ve realized, and I think Roberta you touched on this earlier, but I’ve realized how important it is for me to stay in ‘the struggle’... “if my work through wellness and diversity and creating this diversity and inclusion space means that I can foster conversations even 10 years down the line, and more brown women are comfortable in this situation, that’s a good thing.”

Nadia shared next,

“[On my vision board, there is this] picture saying ‘representation matters’. It has the Black actress who is in Star Trek, which was a big deal when it came out. Because, not only was it a Black actress in the 1960s, but she was not a maid. She was perceived as smart and had an important role. That’s been a lot of what’s driven me. I hope that when I make it, do whatever, I want to be successful, I hope that someone younger than me or someone who’s striving to get what I get can see that I did it; representation matters.”

I think that is important for all of us to remember, *Nadia added*. I think we should include that picture on the composite vision board.

Anna continued by adding,

Even though in some of these leadership spaces on campus, “people will make microaggressions towards me that in any other setting I would be like, ‘Excuse me, I don’t appreciate that comment,’ and I would feel comfortable voicing my opinion... [But I recognize that these spaces allow me to] ‘get to a position of power.’ It’s something I feel like I have to do, because if People of Color aren’t in positions of power, then we can’t help each other reach those same positions of power.”

Noticing no one else had anything to add, Olivia began to speak.

These are amazing motivators ladies. You have inspired me with all of your awesomeness today. Before we end our dialogue, for our last question, I would like to hear about how you stay encouraged and motivated. We talked about so much, about what leadership looks and feels like as a collegiate WOC. How to do you persist?

Self-validation is critical to persist with leadership as a WOC.

Lisa eagerly spoke first, sharing,

“I let my work speak for me instead of having other people speak for me. I validate myself before anybody else does.”

I think for me, *Ruby added,*

“knowing I’m capable of doing [leadership] there’s no reason for me to go for less. It’s like if I already know I can be great and I’ve been told and I’ve seen it and I’ve witnessed it, then why I’m I going to sell myself short? To not strive for that every time?”

I put ‘Black girls rock’ on my vision board, *said Nadia,*

“just because Black girls rock! I love that movement; I think that movement encompasses so many great leaders...there’s an entire awards ceremony that not only has leaders, but has leaders who look like me. I just picture a bunch of little Black girls watching it and seeing that, and it’s really important to me.”

Similar to Nadia, *Lisa chimed in*, I have ‘Black girl magic’ on my board. *She continued*,

“Black girl magic in leadership I feel like, personally I feel like Black women have so much power just like in leadership, there are no bounds to what we will be able to do or what we will be able to change. It’s okay to be a leader. It’s okay to live up to expectations or beat other’s expectations of you. I think that’s the most valuable thing I’ve learned.”

I think those both deserve a spot on the composite vision board, *Nadia added*.

Lisa pointed to another image on her vision board before continuing,

This image here ‘Black soap, coconut oil, lots of water, and shea butter’, *she chuckled*, yes, I know it sounds like I’m about to do my hair.

Lisa and the other ladies laughed.

But it reflects how I keep myself ‘in’ on this leadership journey as a WOC. Let me explain it.

Lisa began to explain,

“All right so we all know Black soap is an astringent, it’s really soft on your skin but it cleanses. Coconut oil is to seal. Lots of water [reflects the importance of] staying nourished; [water is key] for anything to grow. The shea butter [allows you to] glow. You have to wash, seal, and nourishing yourself back to health in order to grow and be able to

move on from certain things [as a leader]. This image reflects how important it is to take time for self-love and healing in leadership. It's just a healing mechanism for me."

That's a dope explanation Lisa, *said Izzy*. I would have never connected those things, that almost every Black girl uses for her hair, to leadership. On the composite board it goes, *Izzy laughingly added*.

Izzy continued,

I remind myself often of the quote I have on my vision board and I think it definitely deserves a spot on our composite board, "you are beautiful, you are loved, you have purpose." This quote reminds me that even though there may be "challenges, it's important to stay true to yourself."

Thanks ladies, *said Olivia*.

The challenges, triumphs, motivations, and inspirations that you each shared, provided unique insight into what it looks like to be a collegiate WOC engaging in leadership at a PWI. You all truly painted a beautifully imperfect picture of leadership at the intersections of identity, power, and context.

This last quote that Izzy shared is a good reminder that we are important, we are beautiful regardless of the labels and/or stereotypes others may place on us, and that we have purpose. As WOC student leaders, we must walk in it. Ladies, I can't wait to share our composite vision board at our retreat closing program. It truly reflects the beautifully imperfect picture of leadership that we all experience as WOC leaders. I am proud of what we all are doing on our campuses. Even more, I am grateful for our voices and presence as WOC collegians. We Rock!

Olivia's final words brought the dialogue to a close. The women looked exhausted but reflexive. Pairs of women walked out of the room, still conversing and laughing with one another. Olivia sat back and reflected as she made additional notes in her facilitator's journal.

WOC City-Wide Retreat 2017

Sister Circle Dialogue

Part 2: Her 'Vision' of Leadership

It is so empowering to be in a space with these amazingly talented women. Even after a somewhat emotionally charged discussion on what's it's like to be a WOC at a PWI doing leadership, these women remained positive and encouraged. I learned that for these women, my peers, doing leadership and calling oneself a leader do not always go hand in hand. They, like me, acknowledge that having visual representations of possibility and positive self-validations are critical when you are a WOC trying to engage in leadership. I was inspired by how many of them disrupted the idea that they had to do leadership one way or that leaders shouldn't or couldn't look like them. Their commitment to elevate their voices as WOC, empower other SOC, and ensuring SOC and WOC after them also have access, was beyond motivating. Through their stories, they demonstrated how unique and diverse, yet similar, the experiences of collegiate WOC are. I'm happy to call them sister-friends.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, & CONCLUSION

Much about what is known regarding WOC college student leadership has been inferred from either the experiences of all SOC, the experiences of all women, or have been examined for specific racial groups (i.e., Black college women leadership, Latina student leaders; Arminio et al., 2000; Domingue, 2015; Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Yeagley et al., 2010). The limited scholarship on the leadership experiences of collegiate WOC as a collective was the inspiration for this study. As Hughes (1996) proclaimed, the time is now to center the voices and perspectives of WOC in higher education leadership, to learn within and across their cultural and racial differences to affect change. This study fulfilled that charge.

Using critical hermeneutic phenomenology, the lived experiences of the participants for this study were centered to reveal the essence of leadership for WOC attending private PWIs. Theoretically grounded by critical race feminism, intersectionality theory, and positionality theory, this study focused on the interplay of social identity, social location, and the college environment to better understand how collegiate WOC have come to understand, experience, and enact leadership. The research questions that guided this study were:

Within the context of one's multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?

- (a) What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians' understanding/enactment of leadership?

- (b) How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?
- (c) What factors motivate WOC collegians to engage in leadership?

The voices and perspectives of nine collegiate WOC attending private PWIs in the “Midwest City” area was captured through semi-structured interviews and vision boards to answer these research questions. The creative nonfiction transformative dialogue presented in Chapters 4 and 5 revealed key findings that ultimately illuminated the essence of leadership for WOC attending private PWIs. This chapter includes a discussion of those findings, further situating them in relation to the literature and the conceptual frameworks anchoring this study. In addition, this chapter describes implications for future research and practice. The chapter concludes with final thoughts from me, the researcher.

Discussion

Positionality theory, an element of this study’s conceptual framework provides a useful lens to discuss the findings of this study. Positionality theory focuses on the intersections of identity, context, and power (Alcoff, 1988; Kezar & Lester, 2010). It advances standpoint theory (see Harding, 2004) which suggests that individuals have a unique standpoint in the world, as a result, knowledge is and should be socially situated. However, positionality theory posits, in addition to the unique insight, individuals also comprise a social location or position in which their multiple identities exist, are contextually bound, and mediated by various power constructs in society (Kezar & Lester, 2010). The findings from this study illustrate how the unique social locations/positions of collegiate WOC informed the understanding, experience, and enactment of their leadership at the individual, group, and system levels. At the personal level, identity politics

were critical to collegiate WOC's leadership understandings, involvement, and practice. At the group level, contexts—social, cultural, and institutional—facilitated meaning making, motivation, and the leadership engagement of collegiate WOC. Finally, at the system level, collegiate WOC resisted the dominating effects of their gender and race within leadership contexts, by recognizing personal power and learning to traverse systemic power through strategic leadership engagement. Each level and the findings comprising those levels are discussed in the next sections.

Personal Level: The Identity Politics of Leadership

For the women in this study, leadership as a WOC attending a private PWI was first and foremost about identity. The awareness, management, development, and receptiveness to identities, significantly shaped and influenced participants' experiences with leadership in college. The saying 'the personal is political' (see Audre Lorde, 1984a), has been used by several feminists to underscore the relationship between personal experience and socio-political structures. These words held true for collegiate WOC desiring to practice leadership in college. How WOC collegians have come to understand, and in turn, enact leadership in college has been a byproduct of the social identity politics in which they navigated.

Social identity politics reflect the unique tension over socially and institutionally constructed qualities placed on individuals or groups of individuals (Wiley, 1994). Downs (1993) highlighted the power in social identity politics, namely its ability to uncover marginalization in social structures that have failed to recognize those oppressions. Parker and Ogilvie (1996) suggested that the unique cultural experiences of WOC "should inform theoretical explanations of their leadership approach" (p. 190). Unfortunately, when leadership studies have been

conducted, whether in the college environment or outside, the politics of social identities as a mediating factor in doing leadership, have not been fully actualized (Dugan et al., 2008; Dugan, 2017; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996).

The identity politics for which WOC collegians navigated daily, shaped their existences at PWIs, and demonstrated how vastly different ‘doing’ leadership was for this group. Distinct from their White counterparts, WOC collegians engaged in leadership with a hyperawareness of the marginalization attributed to their racial and gender identities. While gender roles and norms have the potential to be shared realities for WOC and White women, gender becomes compounded with race for WOC (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Sengupta & Upton, 2011). Further, when the compounding effects of WOC’s social identities require the adoption of tactics like code-switching, to safeguard from external racialized stressors, engaging in leadership becomes more complex. This is far from the reality for White women and men given their privileged social identity group membership that has positioned them as the ideal leader prototype (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Rosette & Livingston, 2012). These nuances demonstrate the variations in the leadership experiences of WOC collegians compared to their White peers. If attention was not placed on their unique social locations and the systems in which they operate, these nuances could not be properly revealed. Each facet of the individual level will underscore the variance in the leadership experiences of collegiate WOC.

Hyperawareness of social identities. The WOC in this study possessed diverse social identities inclusive of race, ethnicity, culture, linguistic ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, citizenship, and socioeconomic status. When seeking to engage in

leadership, the salient social identities for these women became more pervasive. This resulted in a hyper-awareness of those identities, ultimately informing how, and in what ways, the women enacted leadership in college. The opening dialogue in Chapter 4 starts with this finding as it is foundational to the overall leadership experiences of collegiate WOC. As holders of targeted social identities (i.e., identities that have been systematically underprivileged by society; Tatum, 2013), the WOC in this study daily navigated the hyper-visibility and compounding effects of their race and gender on their private predominately White college campuses. The literature has suggested that racialized and gendered perceptions of self, others, and the institutional atmosphere, can affect how WOC collegians engage socially and academically (Domingue, 2015; Miles, Bertrand Jones, Clemons, & Golay, 2011; Winkle-Wagner, 2009b). This was confirmed by the WOC collegians in this study who shared how their race and gender were very present factors as they daily navigated leadership spaces. These WOC collegians described their minoritized social identities as liabilities, struggled with the limited representation of WOC leaders on campus, and constantly balanced the incongruences of the leader/leadership prototypes with their personal identities. Each of these are discussed further in the next sections.

Social identity liability. Liability is a term used to describe an individual or thing that has the potential to be a burden, handicap, embarrassment, or hindrance (Merriam-Webster, 2017). For the WOC collegians in this study, the complex intersections of their social identities became a liability or burden when attempting to engage in leadership in college. Scholars have described the compounding effects of discrimination because of one's marginalized social identities as a 'double or triple-bind' (Esposito, 2011; Ong, Espinosa, & Orfield, 2011). Because social identities are a function of self-appraisal and external evaluations, individuals whose social

identities are underprivileged often find themselves navigating bias, stereotypes, and preconceived notions that are false representations of those identities (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). As a result, WOC collegians believed their identities posed more of a hindrance when doing leadership at PWIs. It was apparent that viewing one's social identities as a liability caused additional stressors for WOC collegians who desired to be involved and serve as leaders on campus.

As student leaders, all nine WOC collegians spoke to the constant self-appraisal and self-reflection required to be in spaces in which their social identities were in the minority. Desires to have a less visible race, gender, citizenship status, or linguistic ability, for example were expressed by some of the participants to lessen feelings of otherness and to mitigate the marginalization that comes with those minoritized social identities. This was further illustrated through participant Nadia's reflection when she shared:

I almost wish that my race was less visible in a sense, when it comes to how qualified I am for certain leadership positions...it would allow me to be seen like less of an 'other'. Me having my race visible, I think would eliminate some of the pre-conceived notions that people have of me, and some negative stereotypes or negative expectations they may have because of my skin tone. I think that it would make me more comfortable, because I think I would be less on edge about what someone is going to say next.

Because of the limited representation of WOC in predominately White spaces, when WOC did access these spaces, they questioned whether access was given because of abilities or diversity quotas. This uncertainty magnified the hyperawareness of WOC's social identities, creating pressures to prove worth. Consistent with the literature by Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) on SOC at PWIs who often feel pressure to prove their abilities (i.e., 'the proving process'), WOC collegians in this study also felt like they needed to prove their worth. They sought to

prove that they could engage in leadership and prove that they had access because of their abilities, not because of their social identities.

This desire to ‘prove’ worth and abilities is also consistent with research in psychology that examined the goals of individuals in interracial interactions. Research by Bergsieker, Shelton, and Richeson (2010) discovered that individuals from minoritized racial groups, specifically Black and Latinx communities, had a stronger desire than their White counterparts, to be viewed as competent and respected as opposed to being liked and appearing moral. This preference is often a result of the desire to mitigate negative social stigmas and stereotypes associated with one’s social group memberships (e.g., race, gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.). Literature has documented the historical ‘staying power’ of negative stereotypes surrounding the competency of POC. Descriptors such as lazy, ignorant, less intelligent, or stupid have persisted as negative stereotypes about Black and Latinx individuals (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Devine & Elliot, 1995; Weaver, 2007).

To counter these perceptions, several WOC in this study spoke to the importance of lessening the liability or social damage that could result from the stigmas associated with their racial group memberships. For these women, there was significant emphasis placed on insuring they were respected and viewed as competent and effective leaders (Bergsieker et al., 2010).

Participant Myka illustrated this noting:

I feel like whenever I’m trying to navigate a White space, I feel like I have to come professional in a way and come across as very serious and very like, ‘Oh, yeah, I know my stuff, and you’re not going to mess with me or try and call me out for anything.’

In addition to the liabilities around racial identity, several WOC collegians spoke to the liabilities that come with their gender and gender expression, socioeconomic status, and

citizenship status. Being the only woman, being expecting to carry oneself as a woman ‘should,’ or not being able to fully participate in all facets of a leadership experience because of financial barriers, were a few of the liabilities highlighted for the WOC collegians in this study. These findings are consistent with literature that revealed how traditional gender roles and norms impact college women. College women are often met with gendered expectations of how they should interact in academic and social spaces (Sax, 2008; Zamani, 2003). The literature showed that women often self-select, and at times are expected to take on more helper roles in student organizations, be more nurturing and supportive, and less vocal or assertive (Domingue, 2015; Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013). What has been made clear is, it becomes difficult to ‘do’ leadership when you are constantly concerned about the liabilities your social identities could create within those leadership spaces.

Representation matters. Nested under the identity politics of leadership for WOC was the challenges of doing leadership when there are limited examples of individuals enacting leadership that share one’s social identity memberships. Many of the women in this study expressed their frustrations with the limited examples of WOC leaders both on campus and in society. They intentionally included images and inspirational quotes on their vision boards from successful WOC leaders in their lives and throughout society, to illustrate the importance of representation. These images were a constant reminder that representation matters, and that they too were, and could be, successful WOC leaders like the women they admired. Marian Wright Edelman expressed, “you can’t be, what you can’t see” (Wilson, 2007, p. 117). This prophecy was evident through several participants’ stories.

Participant Marie spoke to the power in visual representation when she stated, “I think it’s great to look at people who’ve come up on top and say, ‘if they can do it, I can do it.’” Unfortunately, the institutional climate at PWIs, with limited students and Faculty of Color, makes having visual representation for WOC more difficult. While there has been research that speaks to the benefits of structurally diverse campuses, suggesting its positive effects on student outcomes (see Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002), WOC collegians benefit specifically from increased representation of WOC. When WOC have a “visual correlation between image and possibility” (Tidball et al., 1999, p. 99), they are more likely to persist and thrive within their leadership activities.

Incongruence with leader/leadership prototype. Ironically, the limited role models of WOC leaders perpetuated for some participants like Izzy, Myka, Roberta, Nadia, and Stephanie incongruence within themselves, and WOC in general, of being viewed as the ideal leader. These women’s understanding of leader and leadership were informed by prototypes that did not include their social identities. For several, there was a natural proclivity towards describing a leader as “a White man [with] a boring name,” or “[the] person at the top of the totem pole, the White males.” Further, when leadership was described, for more than half of the participants, it was viewed through positional roles and expressed by the level of power and authority one has over others.

These tendencies speak to the social hierarchy of social group memberships and the privileges afforded to select groups. Because of privilege, dominant groups have the power to define the standards within which marginalized groups function (Guido, 2011). Because of this power, the dominant group becomes the baseline and sets the norm (Tatum, 2013). This is no

different when we examine leadership. When dominant approaches are centered in leadership and when White men are continually viewed as the ideal leader, WOC struggle to imagine themselves in those capacities.

These norms and values of the ideal leader/ leadership prototype were established by society and reinforced in the home and college environment. When men, and specifically White men are considered the ideal leader prototype, WOC's social identities are left on the peripheral and seemingly not congruent with the idea of leadership (Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Rossette et al., 2008). The lack of visual representation of social identities can hinder leadership engagement and weaken self-efficacy. Domingue's (2015) research found that POC mentors and role-models were sources of nourishment for Black women's leadership as they navigated PWIs. Not having role models/mentors or visual representations of WOC leaders and lacking diverse leadership styles can have adverse effects on the level of engagement in college for WOC (Domingue, 2015; Duckett, 2006). Stephanie captured this when she shared:

Very few women growing up I've met, have even had leadership roles. So, when someone finally does it's like 'whoa'. I don't know it kind of unheard of for any of my mom's friends to be CEO of anything or anything other than a housewife. So then when I finally see it, it's weird because you're not expecting a woman in power.

Stephanie highlighted the challenges of accepting WOC in leadership roles when there have been few examples of them in those capacities. Even more, her Asian Pacific Islander identity magnified this leader prototype incongruence. Ideta and Cooper (1999) posited:

Asian women leaders seem to live in the confines of paradoxes. As Asian females, they struggle in organizations which define leaders as primarily male and White ...Behaviors which are typical of leaders (displays of power, authority, and fortitude) are considered atypical for women and doubly atypical for Asian women...expected to be compliant and subservient in their behavior. (p. 141)

This incongruence for Asian Pacific Americans has been cited by several scholars, noting that members of this group are less likely than African Americans and White students to consider themselves or others of their race as leaders (Balón, 2005; Ideta & Cooper, 1999; Liang, Lee & Ting, 2002). It is important to remember, WOC and POC have historically practiced leadership and served as leaders. Unfortunately, the dominant narrative within a Western leadership context is often void of the narratives that elevate the leadership styles, approaches, and perspectives of Communities of Color. When WOC struggle to view themselves, or other WOC as leaders, and doubt their abilities to engage in leadership, it is a disservice to the greater good. This finding emphasizes the critical importance of challenging leadership paradigms that fail to include, value, and respect the unique contributions WOC bring to leadership.

Fluctuating leader/leadership self-efficacy. Hegemony is maintained when minoritized groups enforce dominant norms and/or self-police themselves based off the leader/leadership prototypes created by the dominant group. When this occurs, insecurities arise in one's leader/leadership self-efficacy and it becomes difficult to change the prototypes. Leader and leadership self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's self to consider themselves a leader and belief that one's self can do leadership (Bandura, 1997; Dugan, Garland, Jacoby, & Gasiorski, 2008; Murphy, 2002). Five out of 9 participants expressed fluctuating leader/leadership self-efficacies. They were either 'taken a back' by others referring to them as leaders, not confident in their leadership approaches, or did not consider themselves a leader. This was highlighted in Izzy's reflection when she noted:

'John' knows he's a leader and he is like very prepared to fulfill his role as a leader. I don't necessarily always feel prepared to fulfill my role as a leader. I'm a leader because I saw a hole in the community that I was in that I wanted filled, so I decided to fill it. I do

it because I care about it, not because I'm super confident in my abilities, but if I think I can't do something I'll find someone who can do something.

What was made very evident through the stories shared from participants was that it is extremely challenging to consider one's self a leader and do leadership in college when there are few examples of a leader that share your social identities. This is consistent with implicit leadership theory, which states that individuals rely mainly on existing prototypes of leaders (Phillips & Lord, 1982). When future new information is obtained, it is benchmarked with existing knowledge. As a result, even when participants Izzy and Stephanie have examples of leaders and leadership processes that disrupt these prototypes, they struggle to not equate future experiences with this existing knowledge.

It was affirming however, to hear that even in the midst of insecure leader/leadership efficacies, the woman expressed how critical positive self-validation was to their persistence. They found inspiration from mantras like 'Black girls rock,' or reminded themselves that they are 'beautiful, loved, and have purpose'. Patricia Hill-Collins' (2014) work aligns with this as she referenced the importance of self-definition and valuation, noting that they are not indulgences, but requirements for WOC survival.

Coupled with fluctuating leader/leadership efficacy, the WOC study participants also navigated how to engage in spaces where their leadership approaches diverged from the dominant norm. Of the nine participants in this study, five participants described their understanding of leadership through a traditional, industrial paradigm lens which situates leadership to be positional roles with power and influence (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Dugan, 2017; Kezar et al., 2006). Granted, the leadership constructs framed by the

industrial leadership paradigm have been challenged because of its essentialized approach to understanding, describing, and developing leadership; many aspects are still adopted and frame current conceptualizations of leadership.

Although this general description of leadership resonated with most of the participants, many expressed how their individual practice of leadership diverged from these descriptors. Several WOC in this study sought to reconceptualize leadership for themselves to disrupt the dominant narrative (Parker, 2001). For Roberta, Anna, Myka, Lisa, Nadia, and Marie leadership was more than positional; it was collaborative, reflected everyday impact, and necessitated purposeful action. Arminio et al.'s (2000) study also revealed that SOC tended to describe leadership as more collaborative and team oriented, with less attention to formal positional titles and roles. These divergent perspectives of leadership, while novel, often presented challenges when implemented in the college environment. The themes discussed in the group level speak to the challenges and barriers present when WOC collegians engaged with leadership at their private PWIs.

Group Level: Leadership in Context

The identity politics that arose at the individual level influenced how WOC collegians experienced leadership at the group level. The group level reflects context. It captures the spaces, environments, and climate where WOC collegians enact and experience leadership. The findings for the group level revealed that WOC collegians constantly navigated stereotypes and labels, employed strategies like code-switching and impression management to successfully interact with the dominant group, often felt like 'outsiders within', and strategically accessed cultural and

gender specific spaces to find support and ‘do’ leadership at PWIs. Each group level finding is discussed below.

Navigating stereotypes and labels. The WOC in this study expressed their frequent navigation of stereotypes about their race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender group memberships. Stereotypes reflect socially constructed traits and beliefs about social groups based on historical contexts, media, and group interactions (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000; Domingue, 2015). There were two overarching stereotypes and labels that resonated strongly with most of the women in the study: The ‘Angry Black Woman’ and the ‘Exotic’ woman. These two overarching stereotypes reflect the compounding effects of the social identities WOC possess. Consistent with the literature on SOC at PWIs, the WOC experienced additional stressors because of their minoritized statuses (Swail et al., 2003). These stressors often manifested because of stereotypes and microaggressions. Domingue’s (2015) study on the leadership experiences of Black college women also highlighted the prevalence of the ‘Angry Black Woman’ stereotype. Although Haber-Curran’s (2013) study was not focused on the leadership experiences of WOC college students, she also discovered that the WOC student leaders in her study faced challenges as they navigated stereotypes from peers about their racial and ethnic group memberships. The experiences of the WOC in this study corroborated these findings. Participant Marie described the ‘Angry Black Woman’ stereotype she often navigated. She shared:

I try to make sure even with how assertive as I can be, that I’m not being disrespectful or not being rude, because I think one thing as a Black female that you deal with a lot, is that stereotype of angry Black female. Or Black people are rude, or Black females are rude.

Patricia Hill-Collins (1986) posited many of the characteristics that comprise Black female stereotypes are “actually distorted renderings of those aspects of Black female behavior seen as most threatening to White patriarchy” (p. S17). Like Marie, many WOC cognizant of these historical and socially constructed stereotypes, purposefully strive to challenge and disrupt them. Domingue (2015) highlighted several risks of combating stereotypes. Mainly that the stereotypes are further perpetuated, culture is continually misrepresented, and WOC risk feeling invisible and voiceless in the leadership environment. These risks were framed by the women in this study as liabilities.

Having to constantly deflect stereotypes about one’s social group memberships can be exhausting. This frustration was apparent when the participants of this study who identified as bi-racial or multi-racial, shared their exhaustion with being exoticized because of their physical features and racial/ethnic ambiguity. Nadia expressed this frustration sharing:

A lot of times people will try to guess my race, guess my ethnicity. I’ve had people flat out tell me that I’m exotic. I think that’s centered a lot of the microaggressions I get, and a lot of times they’re in the spaces of leadership. It’s very sad. One of the first things that people ask me when they first meet me is like, ‘So, are you mixed? What are you mixed with?’ Things like that.

Several scholars have discovered the challenges WOC across racial/ethnic groups face because of stereotypes (Hughes, 1996; Vaccaro, 2011). Like the WOC in those studies, the biracial and multi-racial WOC in this study found themselves constantly resisting the negative labels about their social group memberships in order to engage in leadership in college. Furthermore, navigating these stereotypes and labels made WOC even more sensitive to and aware of how their social identities were received.

Congruent with the findings of Sengupta and Upton (2011), WOC collegians like the ones in this study, employ tactics to assist their navigation and survival in college. This study revealed that collegiate WOC rely on these strategies to successfully engage in leadership. To ‘fit’ the standards of leadership outlined by the dominant group, WOC collegians relied on code-switching and impression management. Such strategies were not optional, but a requirement to do leadership for WOC in this study. These strategies allowed WOC collegians to conceal aspects of their social identities to better fit into, survive, and traverse the dominant environment. Each approach served as ‘social identity liability insurance,’ to safeguard against intentional and overt harm.

Code-switching & impression management. Often used interchangeably, code-switching and impression management reflect tactics that are used to help people navigate unfamiliar spaces and emit a perception of fit in that space (Vecchio, 2007). Newman (2014) described impression management as “the process by which we attempt to control and manipulate information about ourselves to influence the impressions others form of us” (p. 91). These tactics can include but are not limited to, verbal and nonverbal communication, adjusting language, physical appearance (e.g., attire, hair), and style (Newman, 2014; Vecchio, 2007). These tactics, or what I would like to call ‘social identity liability insurance,’ allow WOC collegians to conceal aspects of themselves they believe may incumber their leadership experiences in predominately White spaces in college. Newman (2014) posited, the main goal of impression management is to project a favorable version of ones’ self that will render positive outcomes in social situations. Collegiate leadership opportunities are one such social situation.

‘Putting forth a face that will pass’. All nine participants confirmed and substantiated the insights garnered from the work of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (1990), who highlighted the techniques employed by WOC to navigate and survive dominant environments like PWIs. Anzaldúa (1990) posited, “to become less vulnerable to all these oppressors, we have had to change faces. . . Some of us who already wear many changes/inside our skin have been forced to adopt a face that would pass” (xv). This concept of changing faces or adopting a face to pass, speaks to the constant struggle WOC face when navigating predominately White spaces. Participant Anna poignantly expressed this struggle when she expressed,

I have to mute certain sides of me, because I need to be acceptable, to get past the gate keeper...It’s kind of like I need to mute some of my perspectives to make other people feel comfortable enough to give me the chance to have a platform...Sometimes I’m in spaces where, in order to get to that space, I have to shade who I am, but once I’m in that space, I can inspire other people to come to the space.

For Anna, code-switching was required to access spaces typically not afforded to individuals who share her identities. Silencing oneself, muting aspects of culture, and even language were some of the tactics used to display an impression of fit. Within a society rooted in White dominance and superiority, Communities of Color (COC) often find themselves putting forth a more ‘white-washed’ version of themselves to traverse majority spaces. Kenji Yoshino (2006) described this as “covering” (p. 18), or down-playing aspects of one’s cultural identity through appearance (e.g., not wearing braids or a sari), affiliation (e.g., speaking English instead of native language), activism (e.g., affiliating with non-ethnic causes and organizations), and association (e.g., building social capital mainly with White networks). Yoshino (2006) suggested that marginalized communities consciously ‘cover’ to fulfill an unspoken “social contract,” (p.130) in which assimilation occurs because of a presumed reward for doing so. This reward, as

Anna illustrated, looked like access to spaces typically not afforded her and new opportunities for her and other POC.

Aligning, disrupting, and perfecting impressions. As WOC strive to engage in leadership at PWIs, many of which are bastions of patriarchy and hegemonic norms and values, they find themselves engaging in strategic impression management. In addition to code-switching, several WOC spoke to how they actively manage others' impressions of their social identities to lessen microaggressions, stereotypes, and to demonstrate their ability to be a successful leader. Some of the impression management tactics included managing physical appearance, conforming to stereotypical gender roles and gender norms, putting forth twice the effort to extinguish any doubt of abilities, tempering assertiveness to avoid stereotypes, being 'professional', and exuding perfection/extreme capableness in leadership responsibilities.

Stephanie captured this strategic impression management noting:

Being an Asian woman, people are expecting me to be soft-spoken, quiet and nice. And for the most part I am so I don't know if that's me conforming to their expectation or if that's really my identity, like if that is who I am. 'Cause I think if I was the opposite, like very out there and that kind of stuff, people would be taken aback and think 'oh this is weird'. So sometimes it's just kind of easier to conform to their expectations and be that quiet, nice Asian woman; even if that means not taking that leadership position.

The excerpt above reflects the compounding effects of gender, gender norms/values, and race when engaging in impression management. The constant engagement in code-switching and impression management makes it difficult for collegiate WOC to be fully present in leadership spaces. But at the same time, these tactics have safeguarded WOC collegians from overt harm and marginalization based on their social identity memberships.

Effects of code-switching & impression management. Although code-switching and impression management can be viewed as a helpful tactic to WOC, there can be both adverse and advantageous effects for employing these approaches. Adversely, these tactics can take an emotional toll on individuals, create cognitive dissonance, and perpetuate dominant norms. More favorable effects of code-switching and impression management encompass individually-defined authenticity, agency, and cognitive development. Each will be expounded below.

Emotionally-draining. Indeed, the racialized and gendered perceptions of others affect how WOC collegians engage socially, academically, and within leadership spaces. Social stigmas and stereotypes become extra baggage. When individuals have multiple marginalized identities, they find themselves choosing what they can emotionally handle or *need* to center to accomplish a task. This negotiation impacts how ‘authentic’ one chooses to show up, or what elements of their identity are shared with others. Continually engaging in this process of performing one’s identities can be physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing. Participant Lisa described this when she shared, “I’m not, mentally, I’m not dealing with some of my own personal issues...I put on a mask and I’m still trying to operate under this mask and [it] is slowly breaking down.” Lisa spoke directly to the emotional toll of exuding perfection and ‘performing’ in her leadership capacities, noting the stress she constantly felt trying to be the perfect WOC student leader. If not aware, the undo stress from code-switching and impression management can impact other areas of a student’s life including their personal lives, academic performance, social interactions, and overall mental and emotional health.

Cognitive dissonance. When SOC find themselves juggling how to show up in all spaces (i.e., ‘more professional’ in White spaces, or more ethnic in culturally congruent spaces) a level

of cognitive dissonance occurs. Arminio et al. (2000) discovered that the SOC leaders in their study expressed losing something by participating in leadership experiences in college.

Specifically, there was a piece of oneself lost, when constantly negotiating elements of their social identities. Determining how, and to what degree, to be one's authentic self in any space presents a dialectical tension; a tension that is not always easily reconciled. If individuals are always managing and monitoring their interactions with others, there are fewer cognitive resources available to manage other things (i.e., academic work, self-care; Bergsieker et al., 2010). This tension was expressed by several participants in the study and reiterated in the excerpt below by participant Nadia. She explained:

My identity is biracial, but I identify as Black in leadership spaces. I don't want to seem like the angry Black woman, I don't want to do anything that would make people perceive me as 'ratchet' or 'ghetto.' I just feel like that would be a way for someone to, in a way, discredit me and the things that I say, and the things that I bring to the table. I always try and make sure that, it's kind of like a balance between trying to fit a certain image, so people won't perceive me as like, 'That Black girl.' But, also wanting to stay true to myself.

Cognitive dissonance is not just experienced by WOC collegians, but can be experienced by all who seek to manage others' impressions. When impression management practices are considered within interracial interactions, engaging with peers across racial and ethnic difference has the potential to be more cognitively depleting than within group interactions (Richeson & Shelton, 2007). This is primarily because of divergent goals of impression management between groups (Bergsieker et al., 2010). According to Bergsieker et al. (2010), SOC desired respect, being viewed as competent, and for others to recognize intergroup differences. Contrarily, White students desired ingratiation (i.e., being liked), assimilation, and finding common ground over intergroup difference. When there are divergent impression management goals, conflicting

experiences can arise. Indeed, there is a considerable amount of literature that speaks to the benefits of interracial interactions for college students; specifically, increased learning about difference, development of cultural knowledge and understanding, and increased leadership capacity (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Dugan et al., 2013; Gurin et al., 2002). However, if impression management goals continue to diverge, the benefits of these interactions cannot fully manifest.

Perpetuation of dominant norms. Research has purported risk associated with ‘putting forth a face that will pass’ to traverse interracial spaces, noting that doing so can prevent the dismantling of stereotypes POC wish to destroy (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Chaudhry, 2006; Newman, 2014). Participant Roberta’s narrative highlighted the delicate balancing act required when ‘covering’ aspects of one’s identities. She stated:

Let’s say I’m too undocumented, what does that mean? Not for me, for me I could never be, but for [the board of trustees] if I’m too undocumented, I could just not be taken back for the position next year, so what’s the security in that?... If I go there, and I’m like me, and I’m this new version of what I consider the current version of myself, will they ever accept another person who holds some, or all, of my identities into this position again? Presenting myself in a way that says, ‘It’s okay to have more of us,’ and having to play it a little safe until eventually we’re all in there and they can’t do anything, but have us there. That’s long term.

For Roberta, she was willing to risk perpetuating dominant norms in the moment to disrupt them more permanently in the future. It is plausible if POC constantly downplay their racial and cultural heritage, they may run the risk of members of the dominant group not seeing the unique perspectives and benefits of leadership by POC anchored in cultural richness. However, dismantling stereotypes is not, nor should be the sole responsibility of COC. Further, challenging societal pressures to perform, conform, pass, or cover should not be left to the

individual (Chaudhry, 2006). Viewing race as a performance demonstrates that it is an ‘act’ done by all, not just COC. It reflects how impactful performing race is to the perpetuation of racism in society. While individuals have the agency to perform their identities, true agency comes when the systemic forces—within society, culture, institutional structures, and traditions, that require one to even conceal or code-switch—are neutralized (Chaudhry, 2006; Willie, 2003; Yoshino, 2006). Until the larger issues are addressed true freedom, and the disruption of the possessive investment in whiteness, cannot be fully actualized (Lipsitz, 2006).

Individually-defined authenticity, agency, cognitive development. If one is always concealing or covering, can true authenticity ever be achieved? As the participants in this study have illustrated, the answer is yes. If we ‘lean into’ authenticity and view code-switching through the lens of performativity, agency—not inauthenticity—becomes the by-product. Willie (2003) suggested:

By treating race as acquired, like a skill or a behavior, we can begin to see it as something over which individuals have differing degrees of control and varying options for agency, as an aspect of identity that is at least partly performed, continuous, and contingent. (p. 7)

When individuals have the agency to show up in ways most authentic to them, and for the situation at hand, code-switching or covering becomes an asset not a liability. The agency afforded to individuals who are cognizant of how to control, project, and perform their identities is empowering. Chaudhry (2006) posited, “The freedom to perform our identity gives us the power to define its meaning” (para. 20). Although it may seem as if POC conform to whiteness when they code-switch, they are in fact keenly cognizant of the societal scripts and roles they play (Newman, 2014). When the WOC in this study engaged in code-switching and/or impression management they were not being inauthentic, but had assessed their environments to

determine which aspects of their identities required projection or concealment at that given time. These decisions can be a matter of safety, access, or a matter of disrupting stigmas.

WOC collegians engage in leadership dialectically, holding two seemingly contrary ideas constant: being their ‘authentic selves’ and ‘putting forth a face that will pass.’ Being able to manage this dialectical tension deepens one’s cognitive development. While there may be some dissonance, it takes considerable strength and mental fortitude to be a WOC collegiate leader in predominately White spaces. This unique tension is ever-present and mediates their overall leadership experience. Unfortunately, this tension is not explored in the college student leadership literature. College student leadership development would benefit greatly from repositioning its language around authenticity in leadership.

Leadership as ‘outsiders within.’ Even after attempting to safeguard one’s self from the baggage that comes with navigating stereotypes and social stigmas, WOC collegians still found themselves on the peripherals in leadership spaces. Hill-Collins (1986) introduced the term ‘outsider within’ to describe how WOC can have both access and feel isolated simultaneously. The “nearness and remoteness” that Hill-Collins (1986, p. S15) spoke of, captures many of the feelings WOC in this study described as they engaged in leadership in predominately White spaces. Although they had ‘access,’ the participants in this study felt like their social identities were tokenized in White spaces. They also felt pressure to be the cultural gatekeeper and responsible for educating their White peers.

When there is a lack of a critical mass of POC at PWIs, any form of difference becomes co-opted and used to display diversity. This becomes challenging for WOC collegians who desire to engage in leadership in spaces incongruent with their visible social identities. They in

turn become the ‘only one.’ This further heightens the awareness WOC have of their social identities and puts them on the defense for any potential microaggression or stereotype. As Marie eluded:

[Sometimes when I’m the only Person/Woman of Color in a space there’s this] feeling of just not having a voice, not having presence, not being respected in their presence. [It feels like] their voice, and their words, their thoughts and ideas [are the only ones valued] ... it’s a constant question of, ‘am I being too aware [or sensitive] of my identities, is this really a discrimination thing? Or, is it that they genuinely didn’t hear me? Or was it just that they weren’t hearing me because they weren’t listening to me?’

An ‘outsider within’ status can cause feelings of isolation, invisibleness, and feeling silenced (Domingue, 2015). These feelings are compounded when there is a lack of visual representation and a limited number of peers of color to engage with (Martínez Alemán, 2000).

The WOC in this study who identified as Black described having to educate the majority when inappropriate remarks or stereotypes are made. Martínez Alemán (2000) described this a “race talks” to illustrate how WOC educate their White peers and faculty about racial and /or ethnic topics (p. 141). The WOC collegians in this study expressed the risks involved with this education, noting the exhaustion of constantly educating others about their social identities, the risk of being isolated if they offend someone while educating them, or permanently assuming the role of educator when others become uninterested in doing better. Martínez Alemán (2000) posited that WOC experience cultural stress when they are always “race ready,” depleting them of intellectual and emotional energy (p. 141). Lisa expressed this emotional depletion when she shared, “I have to literally teach [White people] about me, then I have to teach you how and why things upset me, and then teach you how your view is wrong. It’s too much teaching!”

I found it interesting, however, that there was more emphasis on teaching others about one's race versus teaching about one's gender identity as WOC collegians. This could be attributed to the participants' gender identity development, but I would argue that it has more to do with identity salience. As several of the women eluded to in the opening introductions in the Chapter 4 sister circle dialogue, their salient social identities are often what others see first. For many of the participants, their race then their gender was most salient. Social identity literature suggests that the external prescriptions of an individual's social identities can become internalized and shape self-definition (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). This could account for some of that dissonance.

To combat the feelings of otherness, exoticism, isolation, and all the many statuses collegiate WOC possess when in predominately White spaces, they find support and encouragement in cultural and gender specific spaces. These spaces were affirming of WOC's multiple and intersecting social identities, nurtured their gender and racial identity development, fostered community, and provided an outlet for leadership practice. Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) suggested that culturally-congruent organizations were the main sources of engagement for Black students. This was true for an overwhelming majority of the WOC in this study, and for all the women who identified as Black. In addition, 8 out of 9 WOC in the study expressed that gender-congruent groups (i.e., WOC student organizations) were main sources of engagement. Consistent with the findings from Baughman and Bruce (2011), the WOC in this study nurtured their sense of self and enhanced their identity development by engaging in leadership with gender and culturally specific organizations. As Anna shared:

Before I had that support system of Women of Color, I felt like I was alone on campus, but once I had friends who were encouraging me to take on these positions, because they were like, ‘You’re capable. You can do all of these things.’ Taking those words out of [that space] I was more ready to handle leadership positions in other organizations.

Like the SOC in Kimbrough and Hutcheson’s (1998) study, and as illustrated in the excerpt from Anna, cultural and gender specific spaces have the potential to bolster leadership efficacy. These ‘counter-spaces’ offer a safe and brave space to affirm WOC identities and leadership abilities.

Even though cultural and gender specific spaces were affirming, some WOC still expressed feeling like ‘outsiders within.’ Feeling insufficient with one’s cultural expression were the main reasons for this ‘outsider’ status in culturally-specific spaces. Another trade-off or negative byproduct of code-switching and impression management is the risk of cultural isolation. POC often find themselves under pressure to perform different versions of themselves for different audiences (Chaudhry, 2006; Newman, 2014). The tension of being labeled as ‘acting White’ or being more ‘authentically ethnic’ to avoid in-group labels like ‘oreo’ or ‘coconut’ (Chaudhry, 2006) are ever-present. Izzy highlighted this dynamic when she shared, “I got to college, I was still being told that I act like a White girl, that I talk like a White girl.” Not expressing ‘Blackness’ through language and behavior, presented barriers and challenges when engaging in spaces that ideally would be culturally congruent and affirming.

System Level: Strategic Leadership Engagement

The final level of the essence of leadership for WOC collegians at PWIs captures the system. This level illuminates the personal power WOC harnessed to traverse systemic power structures. Despite the socio-political location WOC reside, WOC collegians found the agency to purposefully place themselves in spaces with limited representation of WOC to elevate their

voices, open doors for others to access the same spaces in the future, and empower other SOC to persist and ‘do’ leadership. Even when navigating stereotypes, social stigmas, and feelings of otherness, the WOC in this study found ways to resist.

Navigating systems (i.e., navigational capital) and “lifting others as we climb” (i.e., social capital; Yosso, 2005, p. 80), reflect two important forms of capital COC harness (Yosso, 2005). Each were utilized by the WOC collegians in this study as they engaged in leadership. Navigational capital consists of the skills needed to traverse systems that were not designed with COC in mind. Social capital reflects the critical importance of building one’s network and assisting others to do the same. Understanding that some of the leadership opportunities at PWIs were not designed with them in mind, WOC collegians thoughtfully accessed spaces to acquire experiences for themselves and other SOC. Further, through strategic leadership engagement, WOC bolstered their resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) by intentionally challenging and disrupting practices that continued to marginalize and exclude.

‘My presence is an act of resistance’. The beginning of this discussion focused on the importance of representation. For the WOC collegians in this study, while external representation was critical, it was equally significant for them to represent themselves in leadership spaces. There was a consistent commitment to elevating the voices of WOC in leadership spaces on campus. The WOC collegians in this study acknowledged the importance of accessing predominately White spaces. As Anna stated, “If I don’t see anyone who looks like me in a space, I’ll say, why not me? Why shouldn’t I be in [these] spaces?” Even more, the WOC in this study stressed using and maintaining their voices. Marie described this when she shared, “I always feel a need as a Woman of Color to lead or to make sure that you understand that I’m still

here. I'm still someone you need to be listening to...I've always had my voice." Her sentiments, and those of her fellow WOC collegians in the study, reiterate the critical need for WOC to be in spaces not typically afforded them to elevate the perspectives and voices of WOC.

Central to the act of resistance through strategic engagement was WOC collegians using their voices to disrupt normalcy. When the collegiate environment lacks a critical mass of POC, like the environments of PWIs, there is a tendency for spaces to be very homogenous (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Wolf-Wendell, 2000). Several participants believed mainstream predominately White student spaces at PWIs (e.g. student government associations, orientation, fraternity and sorority life) are better resourced and have more access to institutional support since there is an assumption that they serve the needs of 'all students.' The WOC collegians in this study expressed their observation with the inequitable access and resources between culturally-specific and predominately White student groups.

For those reasons, several WOC used their strategic engagement to disrupt the status quo; to infiltrate White spaces and infuse POC in those spaces. For several WOC collegians, they were used to being the only or one of a few diverse identities in predominately White spaces. Therefore, the discomfort or risks of tokenization and isolation were worth it to achieve the ultimate goal of other SOC having access in the future. Anna reflected on the power of this access when she stated, "[I recognize that these leadership spaces allow me to] 'get to a position of power.' It's something I feel like I have to do, because if People of Color aren't in positions of power, then we can't help each other reach those same positions of power." Anna's point speaks

to the benefits of social capital for COC; accessing spaces allows WOC to lift others along the way to also have access (Yosso, 2005).

Finally, WOC collegians articulated being motivated to empower other SOC at PWIs through their leadership experiences. This connects back to representation mattering. WOC collegians' physical presence in predominately White spaces allowed them to be visual representations of possibilities for their peers. Like the WOC students in Martínez Alemán's (2000) study on WOC peer friendships, the WOC in this study emphasized the benefits of empowering other WOC and SOC. They shared information about how to navigate the campus climate, how to get more involved, and how to persist. These benefits were shared by all the WOC in this study, agreeing with Myka that "it's my duty to be in [leadership] positions like that, that advocates for people of my [communities]." This 'pay it forward' attitude allowed other SOC to acquire navigational and social capital to continue the cycle.

These findings uncover the unique motivations WOC have for leadership engagement. This fills an important gap in the literature on college student leadership. While much of the current literature on college student leadership focuses on capacity building and efficacy (see Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Dugan, Fath, Howes, Lavelle, & Polanin, 2013; Dugan & Komives, 2007, 2010; Dugan, Kodama, Correia & Associates, 2013), there is limited scholarship on motivation for engaging in leadership in college (Cho, Harrist, Steele, & Murn, 2015; Correia-Harker, 2016; Keating, Rosch, & Burgoon, 2014; Rosch, Collier, & Thompson, 2015). When WOC collegians are centered, that data is practically non-existent.

Much of the insights regarding an individual's motivation to lead (MTL) have been inferred from Chan and Drasgow's (2001) MTL scale. This quantitative measurement tool relies

on noncognitive or implicit assumptions of leadership and measures internal and external self-concept and goal actualizations (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Reliance on implicit assumptions of leadership and self-concepts, makes it difficult to consistently measure MTL when leadership understandings, like those of collegiate WOC, diverge from the dominant narrative (Correia-Harker, 2016). The literature on MTL also fails to consider the interplay of social identities and does not specifically examine collegiate WOC's motivations for leadership. The findings from this study contributes to the literature by providing several motivators for WOC leadership engagement. MTL for WOC collegians was more than just an attempt to manage external and internal concepts or actualizing personal goals, it was about being heard, disrupting the status quo, and advancing the collective group.

A deeper discussion of this study's findings revealed how the essence of leadership manifest for collegiate WOC attending private PWIs. These findings emerged at the individual, group, and system levels and underscored the interplay of identity, power, and context in leadership. WOC collegians understood, experienced, and enacted leadership with their unique social identities in mind. Their hyper-awareness of identities made them more on guard to external stressors like stereotypes and microaggressions. To circumvent those stressors, WOC collegians engaged in code-switching and impression management. Navigating various leadership contexts at PWIs at times made WOC collegians feel like 'outsiders within.' Feelings of tokenization, expectations to represent all people who share their identities, and educating the majority characterized those 'outsider' interactions. Finally, WOC collegians strategically engaged in leadership experiences that would allow them to elevate the voices and perspectives of WOC, empower other SOC, and create access for those after them. These themes capture the

essence of leadership for collegiate WOC attending private PWIs. The next section focuses on implications for these findings on student affairs practice and leadership research on WOC.

Implications

In Chapter 2, I presented key ingredients I believed were necessary to develop the leadership of WOC collegians. Specifically, from the gaps found in existing leadership studies and college leadership literature, I posited WOC collegians' leadership development would be enhanced from a redefined leader[ship] prototype, bolstered leadership self-efficacy, and intentional leadership identity development. The findings from this study revealed that these ingredients are indeed necessary to adequately address the leadership needs of collegiate WOC. Based on these key ingredients, validated by the findings of this study, I offer forth several implications for student affairs practice. Specifically: intentional leadership development for WOC collegians, affirmation of the leadership assets of WOC, incorporation of code-switching and impression management tenants in leadership development, attention to power in leadership engagement spaces, and leadership mentoring for WOC collegians. Followed by a review of each, implications for future research are offered.

Implications for Practice

Intentional leadership development for WOC collegians. The findings from this study reaffirms the literature on college student leadership that recognizes the insufficiency of 'one size fits all' approaches to leadership development (Miles et al., 2011). Intentional leadership development for WOC collegians requires identity development work. Ely et al. (2011) suggested that leadership development be viewed through the lens of identity. Doing so elevates the nuance in the lived experiences, social locations, and ways of knowing of diverse individuals.

For WOC collegians, being hyperaware of one's social identities, navigating stereotypes, engaging in code-switching and impression management in leadership spaces, and experiencing a fluctuating leader and leadership efficacy because of all these forces, capture the unique leadership experiences of collegiate WOC. Given these nuances, it is imperative the leadership development for WOC collegians be taken seriously.

We must understand the effects compounding marginalized social identities have on leadership practice. As demonstrated in this study, WOC collegians value leadership experiences that acknowledge their multiple and intersecting social identities, and views those identities as assets not liabilities. Understanding how WOC collegians negotiate and reconcile their identities is instrumental to understanding their leadership development needs. When WOC collegians express that their social identities are liabilities in leadership spaces at PWIs, we have failed as educators. For far too long the study and practice of leadership has been divorced from context, narrowly defined and confined by what has become leadership studies and development (Ospina & Su, 2009). The context of one's identities, the context of one's social location, and the contexts of the environments in which individuals choose to engage in leadership—all matter. Acknowledgement of diverse leadership languages (i.e., understandings and approaches to leadership) provides a better lens through which to develop WOC collegians' leadership.

Until there is a greater commitment to embrace this nuance in leadership, WOC will continue to be uncomfortable and underrepresented in predominately White leadership spaces. It is clear, a better understanding of the interplay of social identities and leadership development is required. Within the collegiate context, we must go beyond just increasing the presence of SOC in various leadership opportunities; the days of tokenizing minoritized identities to give off the

allusion of inclusion should end. The leadership development curriculum should be designed to highlight and positively affirm the unique approaches and experiences of those underrepresented in the leadership text.

Targeted programs designed specifically for WOC are another way to intentionally develop their leadership capacity and build efficacy. As a scholar-practitioner I have observed first-hand the benefits of population focused development. Programs like *Elect Her*, through the American Association for University Women (AAUW), provide a space to nurture women's leadership capacity, efficacy, and motivation to pursue formal high-profile leadership positions. The literature has confirmed that a woman's leadership engagement in college, directly informs her engagement post-college (Yeagley et al., 2010). Although *Elect Her* focuses on positional leadership, the model of the program centers the voices and needs of women. This approach, when applied to collegiate WOC, can further magnify their leadership capacities and allow their unique social locations to inform their development.

Affirm the leadership assets of WOC. The leadership experiences of WOC collegians in this study revealed several unique assets they possess that guide their leadership engagement. Earlier I highlighted Tara Yosso's (2005) work on community cultural wealth, specifically the use of navigational, social, and resistant capital by WOC to successfully traverse the higher educational environment. In addition to the forms of capital presented in Yosso's (2005) work, this study has illuminated additional forms of capital, or assets, I believe WOC possess as they engage in leadership and perform the leader role. These leadership assets of WOC consists of: adaptive capital, resilient capital, 'covering' capital, and dialectical thinking capital. As we

consider how to best support and develop the leadership capacity and efficacy of this group, it is important to affirm and nurture the assets WOC bring to leadership spaces.

Adaptive capital. For WOC collegians, they demonstrated an innate ability to assess environments and if necessary, adjust both self and leadership approaches to successfully navigate those environments. This capital manifested through the adoption of divergent leadership styles (e.g., leadership is activism, everyday impact, purposeful action), as well as engaging in code-switching and impression management depending on the social dynamics. When spaces were not designed with you in mind, understanding how to access those spaces and then adapt while in those spaces is paramount for success. Further, when this asset is celebrated, how leadership is practiced can become more nuanced and receptive to the divergent approaches employed by WOC collegians.

Resilient capital. Having the fortitude to not be dissuaded from pursuing leadership opportunities, even when systemic forces say otherwise, requires a considerable amount of resilience. The WOC in this study displayed that resiliency by persisting amid bias and stereotypes, despite their competence being questioned, and while being sorely represented during the process. Often, when resiliency is framed in a collegiate context, it is presented from the perspective of academic persistence and matriculation. However, there is a considerable amount of resilience required to successfully traverse leadership experiences with minoritized identities like the ones held by WOC collegians. Resilient capital can positively bolster WOC collegians' leader and leadership self-efficacy, and as a result their aspirational capital. When WOC view themselves as leaders, capable of engaging in leadership they can envision future leadership experiences with their identities centered. By supporting and encouraging WOC to

pursue leadership experiences, even when barriers are present, their resilient capital is deepened and the representation of WOC in leadership spaces increases.

‘Covering’ capital. Code-switching is an art. As comedian Dave Chappelle suggested, POC have to be ‘bilingual’ in whiteness to navigate society. Code-switching affords WOC the opportunity to ‘speak’ the language of the dominant culture to successfully navigate those environments. Knowing how to ‘cover’ or code-switch is a privileged skillset that is learned. An individual’s social location influences whether this skillset is learned and even more whether an individual is aware that it is a skill worth adopting. While the WOC in this study were taught this was an asset worth acquiring, not everyone is given the opportunity. Although code-switching is not unique to COC, the social repercussions for not harnessing this skillset for COC could be detrimental to their success. Establishing closed spaces within the leadership context for discussions on identity politics and its by-products—code-switching and impression management—provide targeted leadership development for WOC. Harnessing this asset within WOC can open the door to nurturing other forms of capital like social, aspirational, adaptive, and resilient.

Dialectical thinking capital. The ability to hold two presumably conflicting ideas constant defines dialectical thinking (Dugan, 2017). For WOC collegians, the practice of dialectical thinking has become a necessary cognitive artform. Often experiencing predominately White higher education environments as ‘outsiders within,’ WOC collegians often found themselves balancing feelings of nearness and remoteness; granted access but not fully accepted. Within the leadership context, WOC collegians balanced ‘covering’ with authenticity and viewed themselves as leaders even when the prototype does not. Knowing how to function amid

opposing ideals, values, and perspectives has afforded WOC the opportunity to successfully reframe cognitive dissonance within their leadership experiences. This asset has informed the strategies WOC used to navigate leadership spaces, leadership approaches adapted, and the nurturing of self-efficacy.

Some WOC collegians are not cognizant of the capital they possess and have acquired because of their social location. The development of WOC collegians' leadership capacity can benefit greatly when framed from an assets perspective. How WOC collegians take up the leader role and practice leadership is much about their identities and lived experiences. These leadership assets are directly informed and even shaped by that lived experience. Affirming these assets for WOC collegians can increase their presence in leadership spaces, validate their perspectives, and affirm that their voices and experiences as necessary to the study, development, and practice of leadership.

Attend to code-switching and impression management in leadership development.

All students, and in particular minoritized students, engage in code-switching and impression management to successfully navigate leadership environments. Newman (2014) posited, "people consciously manufacture images of themselves that allow them to achieve some desired goal" (p. 91). Within interracial interactions, impression management goals between SOC and White students are vastly different. SOC desire respect and to be viewed as valid, competent individuals. White students desire to be liked (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Unfortunately, given the social construction of social identities, power, and privilege these goals often do not align. Within the context of collegiate leadership spaces, and specifically as WOC engage in leadership at PWIs, this dynamic is important to consider. Given the divergent perspectives of each group,

the impression management tactic adopted can risk frustrating and dividing rather than bridging difference.

Regrettably, these tactics are not currently addressed in college student leadership development programs. Constructs like code-switching and impression management are often discussed theoretically or within professional practice, but are rarely unpacked in the college context. There has been concerted focus on capacity building, but no attention to factors like code-switching and impression management that could inhibit capacity building. Often, it is easier to promote capacity building versus understanding how and in what ways social forces shape our students' existences. Helping students name, understand, and interrogate how code-switching and impression management manifests within their social interactions and leadership practices can become useful tools to dismantle hegemonic norms within collegiate leadership spaces.

Attend to power in student leadership engagement. Although the WOC collegians' motivations to lead were catalyzed by their agency to affect change, as a researcher I am left wondering if they truly have full agency when engaging in leadership, especially in predominately White spaces. As discussed earlier, WOC collegians find themselves concealing aspects of their identities to circumvent stereotypes and microaggressions to successfully traverse certain leadership contexts. When there is consistent management and concealment of one's social identities, how much agency can be acquired if these tactics are required to maintain the access afforded? Even though WOC collegians have found ways to strategically place themselves in leadership spaces lacking representation from POC, they have not fully actualized their access. Hegemonic norms are still at play, governing how WOC collegians show up in

these leadership spaces and how their leadership approaches are received in those spaces. Until we as educators attend to the unequal power at play in student leadership spaces where there is often an underrepresentation of WOC, we will continue to see limited examples of WOC leaders both in higher education and the greater society.

To address this, it is important to understand and attend to the power present in collegiate leadership spaces. Dugan (2017) suggested that attention to power identifies how power manifests in spaces and attempts to distribute it in equitable ways. When leadership educators work with college students, developing their capacities for leadership, it is crucial to help them understand how their social location manifests in those spaces. Hulko (2009) posited:

Because the sociocultural context in which one lives and the phase of one's life course can determine to a large extent one's social location or, at least, the variance in its expression, we practitioners should focus on teasing out the dynamics of privilege and oppression in the lives of the people with whom we work. (p. 52)

One of the ways this can be achieved is by integrating purposeful dialogue around power in student leadership spaces. Facilitating activities that talk about social location, power, oppression, and privilege can help individuals identify who they are and are not, as a group and in relation to power structures in the leadership space, college environment, and society at large (Hulko, 2009). Activities like the *Power Flower* (see Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, and Thomas, 1991) or *the axes of privilege and oppression* (see Hulko, 2004), can guide students in meaningful conversation about their unique social locations and how to harness shared governance and collective leadership approaches that help to neutralize power dynamics present in traditional hierarchical structures.

Many institutions promote post-industrial leadership approaches with focuses on relational leadership, collaboration, and teams. Yet, the structures of our student organizations continue to align with traditional power structures inherent in positional titles and roles (e.g., president, vice president, chair) and de-emphasizes approaches that would better distribute power (Arminio et al., 2000). A better distribution of power within and across student organizations can help foster more meaningful leadership experiences for WOC attending PWIs.

Leadership mentoring for WOC collegians. Much of the tensions WOC collegians expressed regarding leadership, both the understanding and enactment of leadership, was that there were few examples of individuals doing leadership that look like them. The vision boards, created as a point of data collection, further illustrated the longing for representation of WOC leaders. Having a visual correlation of possibilities not only empowers WOC collegians, but it bolsters their leader and leadership self-efficacies, allows them to see themselves as the ideal prototype, and begins to shift the dominant narrative on best practices for leadership engagement.

One of the ways this can be achieved is through mentoring opportunities for WOC collegians by other WOC. Whitt (1994) posited college women learned to lead by engaging with role models and participating in intentional leadership development activities. Mentoring relationships for WOC by WOC can increase the capital of collegiate WOC. WOC collegians can build their networks, learn how to navigate various leadership contexts considering their unique social identities, and discover ways to resist (i.e., having knowledge, skills, and resources to engage in “oppositional behavior” to challenge inequality; Yosso, 2005, p. 81). The social,

navigational, and resistant capital WOC collegians develop through mentoring relationships can prove invaluable for their leadership engagement in college and beyond.

As a proud alumna of Spelman College, the United States' number one historically Black college, I can speak boldly to the leadership benefits of mentoring for WOC by WOC. As a recipient of peer-to-peer mentoring and faculty/staff mentoring, I understand how impactful those relationships were to me pursuing advanced degrees, becoming a scholar, and a leadership educator. The social, navigational, and resistant capital I acquired allowed me to understand my social location, and harness the power in myself and within the COC to excel. Unfortunately, given the lack of critical mass of WOC at PWIs, PWIs are not always the ideal environment for one-on-one WOC mentoring (Arminio et al., 2000; Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

However, through closed spaces designed for WOC, like WOC leadership programs and general WOC organizations, the benefits of mentoring and networking can be achieved. Even more, these relationships and experiences allow WOC collegians to further build their leadership assets/capital like navigational capital, social capital, and resilient capital, to name a few. Many of the WOC in this study spoke to the advantages of participating in organizations just for WOC. Namely, these spaces provided community, empowered WOC to engage in leadership opportunities in the larger campus community, and bolstered their leadership efficacy through positive affirmation and validation. These spaces vary in design, but have typically been housed in Multi-Cultural Affairs or Women's Center offices within student affairs units. They have been spaces in which students, faculty, and staff WOC come together to learn, support, and encourage one another. While not structured as one-on-one mentoring, WOC only communities can provide

the necessary outlets to harness the social, navigational, and resist capital necessary for WOC to successfully develop one's leadership.

Implications for Research

Critical perspectives & frameworks. This critical hermeneutic phenomenology study, anchored by three critical theoretical frameworks, provided a prime research platform to examine the leadership experiences of collegiate WOC. Using phenomenology allowed for their lived experiences to be elevated. A hermeneutic lens allowed my voice as a researcher to work in concert with the voices of my participants to fully explicate the nuance of their leadership experiences. Finally, a critical lens allowed the social and political structures that mediate the lived experiences of collegiate WOC to be named and scrutinized. Theoretically grounding this study with critical race feminism, intersectionality, theory, and positionality theory ensured WOC were centered always, honored the multiplicity and indivisibleness of their compounding social identities, and ensured power and context were considered when revealing their understanding and experiences with leadership.

It is my position that college student leadership research benefits greatly from infusing critical methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Recent scholarship further advocates for the integration of critical perspectives into leadership studies and development (Dugan, 2017; Dugan, Turman, Barnes, & Associates, 2017). An overlay of critical perspectives to leadership allows for attention to be placed on social location (i.e., the intersection of identity, power, and knowledge) and context (Dugan, 2017). When leadership is examined through a critical lens, concerted focus can be centered on disrupting the status quo and challenging systems that perpetuate normativity in leadership studies and development.

Although this scholarship is positioned to meaningfully advance the study of leadership, much of college student leadership literature still only attends to one facet of social location—social identity—and does so indirectly with little regard to “how structural and interpersonal oppression manifests as students develop individually as leaders or within the groups in which they lead” (Domingue, 2015, p. 454). We cannot continue to rely on research approaches that lack the nuance required to properly explore multiple identities, examine power, and scrutinize systems. As Audre Lorde (1984) posited, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (p. 114). Researchers must become comfortable employing critical methodologies and frameworks to help better elucidate the study and development of leadership for all college students.

Arts based research. This study discovered the benefits of integrating arts-based research (ABR) methods, in the form of vision boards and creative nonfiction transformative dialogue, to further explore WOC collegians leadership. A picture truly is worth a thousand words; as a visual medium, the vision board uncovered new knowledge different than what could be expressed with traditional interview methods alone. By presenting the findings of this study as a creative non-fiction transformative dialogue, the voices of the WOC in this study were elevated and uninhibited by the researcher jargon that often plagues traditional qualitative research findings (Caulley, 2008). Both the vision board and creative nonfiction transformative dialogue are ABR mediums that service critical qualitative research well.

Centering WOC in research. There is always inherent risk involved when you seek to explore the experiences of individuals who share some, but not all social identity memberships. The WOC collegians in this study all shared a common identity of being a cisgender woman,

however they each possessed unique racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, to comprise the ‘Color’ aspect of Women of Color. Attention to the similarities and differences in each participant was important to avoid conflation and generalization. I approached this study thinking that there would be more differences than similarities. I was surprised to see how much the WOC had in common. The WOC who identified as Black/African American, biracial, Latina, and Chicana related to their phenotypes being distinguishing markers for dictating how they engaged in leadership spaces. There were common themes for all participants around socioeconomic status, cultural affinity, gender, and involvement-specifically in cultural and gender specific groups.

By and large, the distinctness in leadership experiences between WOC were based on race. All the Latina, Chicana, biracial/multi-racial, and Black women expressed how their race mediated much of their leadership experiences. From the stereotypes and microaggressions, to the active code-switching and impression management required to combat these stressors, these WOC felt their racial identities influenced their leadership experiences. Although they ‘put forth a face that could pass’ they truly could never ‘pass’ or make their race less visible as one participant desired. While my participant who identified as Asian American Pacific Islander touched on her racial and ethnic identities, they were not mediating factors in her leadership experiences in college. I wonder if this is due to societal racial hierarchy and the ‘model minority myth’ or because of lighter phenotype that allows for better alignment to whiteness (Museus & Kiang, 2009). This is something to explore in future research.

Nevertheless, this study revealed several benefits of examining WOC as a collective. A baseline understanding of the leadership experiences of WOC across racial and ethnic

minoritized groups was established. While not extensive, key differences and similarities emerged between groups. Finally, the findings from this study revealed the interplay of compounding social identities like race, gender, class, and citizenship and demonstrated how WOC across race/ethnicity experience the compounding effects of multiple identities in unique ways.

Limitations

This study would benefit greatly from being expanded to include additional voices of WOC from other underrepresented groups. Although participants for this study met the study criteria, there was overwhelming representation (i.e., 5 out of 9 total) of WOC who identified as African-American/Black. Of that five, 2 identified as bi-racial. Three of the remaining 4 WOC identified as Latina, Chicanx, or multi-racial Latina. The last participant identified as Asian American Pacific Islander. I believe I was limited in the depth I could achieve within and across group differences because of the unequal representation in the sample. Also, the voices of WOC who identify as Indigenous and/or American Indian were void in this study. I believe they would have provided additional nuance. Considering the goal was to capture the leadership experiences of WOC as a collective, the collective voices were not fully present.

The study was open to WOC who attended private PWIs of like Carnegie classification and student demographics in the “Midwest City” area. This parameter was established to ensure adequate access to WOC collegians, given their limited numbers at PWIs. Although representation from each institution was present, one institution was heavily represented. While I do not believe this affects the reliability of the findings of this study, I do think it accounts for some of the shared experiences had by the women. Institutions have unique services and

opportunities. Having a large portion of the sample from the same institution privies those opportunities when findings are corroborated. Future research may benefit from focusing on one institution or insure equal distribution of institutions are present if there is more than one.

Future Research

There are several future directions for research on collegiate WOC and leadership. Given the wealth of insight garnered from the collective experiences of WOC collegians, future research would benefit from continued exploration as a collective. There is still very little collective insight about the experiences of WOC and how those experiences converge and diverge. Researchers are still relying on studies that examine college women leadership or SOC leadership. Little attention is placed on the intersection of those two groups, for which WOC reside.

Concerted attention to leadership motivation, implicit leadership, and the mediating effects of constructs like code-switching and impression management could provide promising insight for WOC leadership engagement. These topics emerged as by-products of general exploration but would be useful to explore intentionally. There is almost no literature on leadership motivation for collegiate WOC. The few studies that exist have expressed the important connection leadership motivation has for leadership efficacy and capacity building for all college students (Correia-Harker, 2016). Insecure leader and leadership efficacies reveal that more research is needed on implicit leadership theories for WOC collegians. When dominant prototypes are still pervasive, it becomes difficult to view oneself as a leader and believe in one's abilities to engage in leadership. Research on this topic could prove invaluable for disrupting these implicit messages. Finally, intentional exploration into the implications code-switching and

impression management have on leadership development and practice are critical for WOC in college. We cannot truly develop the leadership capacities of WOC collegians without attending to the ways in which they show up in our leadership spaces.

Because so much of what was understood about WOC collegians and their leadership had to do with identity, future studies can benefit greatly from a critical cross-analysis of racial and gender identity development with college leadership development. It was evident that as WOC collegians were learning about how to ‘do’ leadership in college, they were doing so in the context of their own racial and gender identity salience and development. When those developmental domains were discussed in the leadership context, it painted a very complex and intersecting web of development. This is certainly worth researching further.

Finally, although this study was qualitative in nature, there are many benefits to examining this topic through a quantitative and/or mixed-methods design. There is the potential to access more WOC perspectives and quantitative scales like the ones comprising the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) can measure additional constructs that impact meaning making, and facilitate leadership capacity building. This research design can possibly explain some of the spaces in which WOC collegians’ capacity and efficacy are bolstered or hindered.

Final Thoughts

As a WOC critical scholar with research foci concerned with critical leadership education, gender, and diversity in higher education, this study gave me life! Learning from the WOC in this study emboldened my commitment to ensuring the study and development of leadership meets the needs of a diverse republic. This study demonstrated the power in the collective voices of WOC. The unique variance in those voices painted a beautifully imperfect

picture of the challenges and joys of being a WOC leader at private PWIs. My hope for this, and future research, is that it will solidify WOC's voices as viable sources to inform knowledge and practice. When WOC collegians close their eyes, and think of a leader, I want them to see themselves; in all their distinctiveness and multiplicity of identities. I want them to become the rule.

As this study concludes, I want to leave my readers with this final thought from Roberta, one of my study participants. She poignantly captures the heart of this study through her final thoughts in our last interview. She stated:

Whoever is reading this, and hears about the different types of Women of Color leaders and the different identities we all come from; [just know] we're still human, we still come from marginalized identities, and there's no such thing as a good or a bad one. We all deserve the same amount of respect and we're all doing what we need to do in different ways. There's no right or wrong way when you're working within a system that wasn't really built for you; when you're being a leader in places that weren't [meant] for you to begin with. We're all human, and we can be very strong. I think there's a beauty in the strength of Women of Color when we're in community, but I think we can also be very broken. It's that brokenness above all, at least, that fuels me every day.

APPENDIX A
RECRUITEMENT EMAIL TO SOLICIT NOMINATIONS

Dear [insert name of university administrator, faculty, or staff],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to ask for your assistance in identifying students to participate in my doctoral research study.

The purpose of this study is to explore how undergraduate Women of Color (WOC) college students learn, experience, and ultimately enact leadership while in college. As a WOC doctoral candidate, with eyes pressed toward the mark of becoming a critical scholar and faculty member in the field of leadership studies and higher education administration, I recognize how crucial this study is to the enhancement of practice.

For this study, I would like to recruit 8-10 WOC college students throughout the “Midwest City, IL” area. Each student will participate in 2 individual interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes each. In addition to individual interviews, participants will complete a vision board to be discussed during the second interview. The total time commitment for the study is approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes.

Participants will be compensated for their participation with a \$25 gift card to a retail vendor of their choice.

As a university staff/faculty member who advises, supervises, and/or interacts with various students, I am asking for your assistance in identifying WOC college students who fit the criteria below and who you think would be interested in participating in my study.

The following criteria are established for participation in this study:

1. Participants identify as a cisgender woman. Cisgender denotes that ones’ gender expression aligns with their biological sex;
2. Participants must identify as a Person of Color. A person of color is an individual from a racial (e.g., African American/Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latin@, Native American, Multi-racial; defined by physiological characteristics like skin color, phenotype, and hair) and/or ethnic (i.e., defined by cultural factors like language, nationality, religion, and ancestry) minority group in the U. S.;
3. The United States is their home of residence;
4. Participants must be an undergraduate student with a sophomore or higher classification attending a private research intensive (R1, R2, or R3), predominately White institution in the “Midwest City, IL” area;
5. Participants must have engaged (currently, or in the past) in a leadership experience (e.g., student leader/activist, student advisor, student scholar etc.) while in college, on campus or in the community.

If you believe you have students in your network who best represent the criteria above, please forward them the attached information so they may contact me at their earliest convenience.

Please do not pressure students to participate, but allow them to review the study details on their own to make an independent decision to participate.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at nplumb@luc.edu or 872-216-2082.

Sincerely,

Natasha T. Turman
Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education Program
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Greetings,

I am Natasha Turman, a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education program at Loyola University Chicago. I am contacting you because I am recruiting participants for my dissertation study. Specifically, I am recruiting undergraduate Women of Color college students (sophomore through senior) attending private research intensive, predominately White institutions in the “Midwest city, IL” area.

The purpose of this study is to explore how WOC collegians experience the phenomenon of leadership in college. As a researcher, I am interested in better understanding how leadership is learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians and discovering how unique social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, inform this process. This study is important to me because as a WOC graduate student, who has worked as an administrator in higher education for several years, I am passionate about understanding the experiences of undergraduate WOC students. Even more, I am committed to changing the gender gap in leadership and ensuring leadership approaches meet the needs of a diverse student demographic.

Participants would be asked to participate in 2 individual interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes each. In addition to individual interviews, participants will be asked to complete a vision board to be discussed during the second interview. The total time commitment for the study is approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes. Participants will be compensated for their participation with a \$25 gift card to a retail vendor of their choice.

If you are interested in participating, please click here (<http://goo.gl/forms/nfEerNQEWVgUTC3>) to complete an online demographic form. The demographic form provides additional information about yourself to ensure criteria is met for the study. Individuals who meet the criteria will be contacted after completing the demographic survey with next steps to participate in the study. If you do not meet the criteria to participate, you will be notified via email.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at nplumb@luc.edu.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Natasha

APPENDIX C

STUDY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

COLLEGIATE WOMEN OF COLOR LEADERSHIP RESEARCH STUDY



Research Study Participants Needed

Research Study: Exploring Women of Color (WOC) college students' experience with leadership.

Study purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore how WOC collegians experience the phenomenon of leadership in college. As a WOC researcher, I am interested in better understanding how leadership is learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians and discover how unique social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion, inform this process.

Proposed Population: Undergraduate college students with sophomore or higher classification; attending a private research intensive (R1, R2, or R3), predominately White institution in the "Midwest City, IL" area (for example: Loyola University Chicago, DePaul University, Northwestern University, University of Chicago); who identify as a cisgender woman. Cisgender denotes that ones' gender expression aligns with their biological sex; from a racial and/or ethnic minority group; the United States is their home of residence; serves (or has served) in some leadership capacity while in college on campus or in the community.

Study Details: The study will involve data collection through 2-60 minute interviews and 1-45-minute vision board.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for their participation with a **\$25 gift card** to a vendor of their choice.

Interested? Complete the online demographic survey here:

<http://tinyurl.com/CollegeWOCStudy>

The demographic form provides additional information about yourself to ensure criteria is met for the study. Individuals who meet the criteria will be contacted with next steps to participate in the study.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

NATASHA T. TURMAN • PH.D. CANDIDATE-HIGHER EDUCATION • LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
NPLUMB@LUC.EDU • 872-216-2082

APPENDIX D
ONLINE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

LINK TO SURVEY: <http://goo.gl/forms/nfEerNQEWWZVgUTC3>

Thank you for expressing interest in this study. To ensure participants meet the criteria outlined in the research study, I ask that you complete this brief (5 minutes or less) survey. Individuals who meet the criteria will be contacted after completing the demographic survey with next steps to participate in the study. If you do not meet the criteria to participate, you will be notified via email. Your responses will only be reviewed by the principal investigator (PI) and the PI's faculty advisor.

Your engagement in this study will shed light on how WOC college students navigate the process of leadership and what that looks like from your unique vantage point. With this study, I hope insight can be offered to meet the needs of future WOC college students, to craft better approaches to the identity and leadership development of this group.

Thank you!
 Natasha Turman, Principal Investigator
 Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education
 Loyola University Chicago
 nplumb@luc.edu

Demographic Information

First and Last Name: _____
 Pseudonym (name to be used in study instead of your actual name): _____
 Phone number: _____
 Email: _____
 Institution: _____
 Classification (i.e.- Sophomore, Junior, or Senior): _____
 Age: _____
 Ethnic Identification: _____
 Racial Identification: _____
 Gender Identification: _____
 Do you personally identify as a Woman of Color?
 • Yes
 • No
 • Unsure what this means

Hometown/ City where you grew up: _____

Major: _____

Please list the organizations (on or off campus) for which you are involved. Note if you hold/held a leadership position in these organizations:

Please list the vendor for which you would like your \$25 gift card: _____

APPENDIX E
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Shifting the Paradigm: A Critical Phenomenology Study Centering the Voice of WOC Collegians to (Re)Conceptualize Leadership

Researcher: Natasha T. Turman (PI), Ph.D. candidate Loyola University Chicago

Faculty Sponsor: Bridget Turner Kelly, Ph.D.

Dear _____,

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The principal investigator of this study is Natasha Turman, a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Loyola University Chicago, under the faculty supervision of Dr. Bridget Kelly. The study will include approximately 8-10 Women of Color (WOC) college students involved in leadership from multiple private research intensive, predominately White institutions across the “Midwest city” area. Your participation as an interviewee will require a total of approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of undergraduate WOC collegian leaders. Specifically, this study seeks to better understand how leadership is learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians and discover how unique social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, inform this process. I am interested in understanding how your lived experiences shape your perspectives on leadership and how your unique social identities inform how you navigate and enact leadership while in college. I am also interested in understanding how your experiences may guide your future engagement with leadership after college.

You are being asked to participate because you meet all the following criteria. You:

1. Identify as a cisgender woman. Cisgender denotes that your gender expression aligns with your biological sex;
2. Identify as a Person of Color. A person of color is an individual from a racial (e.g., African American/Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latin@, Native American, Multi-racial; defined by physiological characteristics like skin color, phenotype, and hair) and/or ethnic (i.e., defined by cultural factors like language, nationality, religion, and ancestry) minority group in the U. S.;
3. The United States is your home of residence;
4. Are an undergraduate student with a sophomore or higher classification; attending a private research intensive (R1, R2, or R3), predominately White institution in the “Midwest City, IL” area;
5. Are engaged (currently or in the past) in a leadership experience (e.g., student leader/activist, student advisor, student scholar etc.) while in college, on campus or in the community.

Procedures:

Consenting to participate in this study means you agree to participate in the following research components:

1. Two 60-minute one-on-one interviews, in person or on-line video call (i.e., Skype or Google hang-out if schedule requires), to be conducted at the beginning of the study and at the conclusion of the study.
2. Complete one vision board. Vision boards will be discussed during the second interview. Vision boards should take approximately 45 minutes of participants' time to construct.

Risks/Benefits:

There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research. During the interviews, you will be asked questions about your childhood experiences, your schooling, people who have influenced your life, your leadership experience, your salient social identities (for example: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic class) and how these identities have shaped your understanding of, and experience with leadership, and your future goals. As a participant, you may experience some discomfort in responding to some of these questions. In addition, participation in the sister circle dialogues will limit your ability to maintain anonymity should that be your desire.

There are foreseeable benefits of participating in this study. As a participant, you may discover this study provides you with a unique opportunity to reflect upon how you've come to learn, experience, and engage with leadership, and may guide your future engagement in leadership after college. The insights garnered from this study will contribute to the body of literature on college student development and college student experiences in college.

Compensation:

To thank you for participating, you will receive a \$25 gift card from a retail vendor of your choice.

Confidentiality:

All your answers are private and confidentiality will be maintained in the following ways:

1. I will ask that you develop a pseudonym that will be used in all written documentation. Participants can also create pseudonyms for their organizations to limit identification.
2. All data pertaining to this study will be identified by a special number (not your name or student number) and kept on a password protected laptop and online secure server. Only the PI, research assistant, and faculty sponsor will have access to this data.
3. After each interview, a transcript will be emailed to you to ensure validity and accuracy of your statements.
4. At the completion of this study, all audio and video files, vision boards, emails, materials, and pseudonym information, related to this study will be destroyed. The electronic

consent forms and transcripts will remain on file in the password protected computer indefinitely to support my research agenda and writing. It is important to keep an archive of transcripts to verify manuscripts drafted from the data analysis. I will insure any copies of transcripts professionally transcribed are not stored by the transcriptionist and destroyed.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you no longer wish to participate in this study, you do not have to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Natasha Turman at nplumb@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Bridget Turner Kelly, at bkelly4@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

I agree to participate in this study, and to the use of this study's data as described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW ONE PROTOCOL

Good afternoon. Thank you for participating in this research project. I really appreciate your time. Over the next hour, I am going to ask you a series of questions related to your experience and engagement with leadership. While the questions asked are not harmful and pose very little risk to you, should you feel uncomfortable by any of the questions or would like to stop the interview at any time, please let me know. You will not be penalized for stopping or withdrawing from the study.

Our conversation today will be audio recorded. The audio recording will allow me to revisit your interview to conduct accurate data analyses and ensure your thoughts are transcribed properly. Are you okay with our conversation being recorded?

Just to remind you about the purpose of this study: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of undergraduate WOC collegian leaders. Specifically, this study seeks to better understand how leadership is learned, experienced, and performed by WOC collegians and discover how unique social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, inform this process. I am interested in understanding how your lived experiences shape your perspectives on leadership and how your unique social identities inform how you navigate and enact leadership while in college. I am also interested in understanding how your experiences may guide your future engagement with leadership after college.

Overarching Research Questions:

1. Within the context of one's multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?
 - a. How do WOC collegians define leadership?
 - b. How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?
2. What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians' understanding/enactment of leadership?
3. How do WOC collegians' socialization around, and experience with leadership in college, affect their desire to practice leadership after college?

Come to Learn Leadership:

1. Tell me a little about yourself, who is "name"?
2. What inspired you to participate in this study?
3. What are your salient (most significant) social identities?
4. What makes those identities most salient for you?
 - a. What does it mean to be "xyz race/ethnicity"; gender; religion
5. What does being a Woman of Color mean to you?
6. What does being a WOC mean in the context of your college experience?
7. This study seeks to explore how you've come to understand/learn this concept of leadership. When you hear that, what thoughts come to mind?
 - a. How would you define leadership?

- b. Do you recall your first representation of a leader?
 - c. Can you recall how was leadership and leading were presented to you as a child?
 - i. What stories do you recall having with your parents, family members, or peers about leadership?
- 8. Growing up, how was leadership and leaders referenced within the context of your multiple social identities? (do you recall any instructions or stereotypes about one or more of your social identities as it relates to leadership, e.g., girls should be seen and not heard).
- 9. When you close your eyes and think of a leader, who do you see?
 - a. What about this person do you admire?
 - b. What elements of who they are and how they lead resonate with you?

Experience/Enact Leadership

- 10. What inspired you to get involved while in college?
- 11. How do you react to people calling you a “leader?”
- 12. As a WOC student leader, what have your experiences been like?
- 13. How would you describe the interactions you have with others in your organizations?
 - a. What is it like to lead in the organizations for which you are involved?
- 14. What expectations did you have of your involvement/leadership experiences?
 - a. In what ways have your actual experiences differed or aligned with your expectations?
- 15. Can you tell me about a time your gender identity mattered when leading?
 - a. What about your race and/or ethnicity? Any stories come to mind?
 - b. How about your other salient social identities? Why are these identities important to your understanding of leadership?
- 16. ***Have you ever felt like you had to “put forth a face that would pass?”***
Clarification: Can you recall a time when you felt you had to put forth a version of yourself that would assist you in navigating/surviving the dominate culture in college; specifically, being a WOC and leading?

or

Felt you had to conceal parts of your identity to navigate your campus environment and engage in leadership experiences

APPENDIX F-2
INTERVIEW ONE PROTOCOL-REVISED 8.31.16

Overarching Research Question:

1. Within the context of one's multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?

Sub-questions:

- a. How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?
- b. What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians' understanding/enactment of leadership?
- c. What factors motivate WOC collegians to engage in leadership?

Come to Learn Leadership:

1. Tell me a little about yourself, who is "name"? or If you had to deliver a 1-minute elevator speech about yourself, what would it entail?
2. What inspired you to participate in this study?
3. What elements of your identity resonate as most important? / What would you say are your most salient social identities?
4. What makes those identities most salient for you?
 - a. What does it mean/has it meant to be "xyz race/ethnicity"; gender; religion growing up?
 - b. Are there ways in which your understandings of these social identities shifted/evolved given life dynamics, social events, family influence, peer interactions, etc.?
 - c. As a college student at this specific institution?
5. What has your experience been like being a WOC at xyz institution? (Delve into campus climate, adjustment on campus, support/lack thereof, etc.)

Shifting gears just a bit, a large element of this study strives to understand what this concept of leadership means for WOC college students. When you hear that, what thoughts come to mind?

- a. Growing up, how was leadership explained to you/ what were your understandings of leadership prior to coming to college?
- b. How would you define your personal definition of leadership?
- c. What experiences or people have helped informed this definition of leadership for you?
- d. How do you react to people calling you a "leader?"

Experience/Enact Leadership (May have to save this for Interview 2)

6. What inspired you to get involved while in college? (Ask poignant questions about specific organizations—why culturally specific org, or why predominantly white orgs?)
7. As a WOC student leader, what have your experiences been like?
 - a. Are there 1-2 stories that illustrate the ways in which your salient social identities impact how you've come to approach (governing yourself/actions/style) and experience (how others receive your leadership in the context of your identities) leadership?
 - b. Can you tell me about a time your gender identity mattered when leading?
 - c. What about your race and/or ethnicity? Any stories come to mind?
8. ***Have you ever felt like you had to “put forth a face that would pass?”***
Clarification: Can you recall a time when you felt you had to put forth a version of yourself that would assist you in navigating/surviving the dominate culture in college; specifically, being a WOC and leading?

or

Felt you had to conceal parts of your identity to navigate your campus environment and engage in leadership experiences
9. What expectations did you have of your involvement/leadership experiences?
 - a. In what ways have your actual experiences differed or aligned with your expectations?

APPENDIX F-3

INTERVIEW ONE PROTOCOL-REVISED 9.12.16

Overarching Research Question:

1. Within the context of one's multiple and intersecting social identities, how do WOC collegians make meaning of, experience, and ultimately enact leadership in college?

Sub-questions:

- a. How do WOC collegians negotiate multiple facets of their social identities as they engage in leadership?
- b. What internal cues and external influences shape WOC collegians' understanding/enactment of leadership?
- c. What factors motivate WOC collegians to engage in leadership?

Come to Learn Leadership:

1. Tell me a little about yourself, who is "name"?
2. What inspired you to participate in this study?
3. What elements of your identity resonate as most important? / What would you say are your most salient social identities?
4. What makes those identities most salient for you?
 - a. How did you come to learn/align yourself with these social identities (what makes them special/important to you)?
 - b. Are there ways in which your understandings of these social identities shifted/evolved given life dynamics, social events, family influence, peer interactions, etc.?
5. What has your experience been like being a WOC at xyz institution? (Delve into campus climate, adjustment on campus, support/lack thereof, etc.)

Shifting gears just a bit, a large element of this study strives to understand what this concept of leadership means for WOC college students. When you hear that, what thoughts come to mind?

- a. Growing up, how was leadership explained to you/ what were your understandings of leadership prior to coming to college?
- b. How would you define your personal definition of leadership? / If you had to describe the term "leadership" what words come to mind?
- c. What experiences or people have helped informed this definition of leadership for you?
- d. How do you react to people calling you a "leader?"

Experience/Enact Leadership

6. What inspired you to get involved while in college? (Ask poignant questions about specific organizations—why culturally specific org, or why predominantly white orgs, on campus, vs. off campus)

7. As a WOC, what have your experiences been like as you engage in various opportunities on or off campus?
 - a. Are there 1-2 stores that illustrate the ways in which your salient social identities impact how you've come to approach (governing yourself/actions/style) and experience (how others receive your leadership in the context of your identities) leadership?
 - b. Are there any stereotypes or predispositions others have about your social identities that affect how you engage in leadership?
8. What expectations did you have of your involvement/leadership experiences?
 - a. In what ways have your actual experiences differed or aligned with your expectations?

9. ***Have you ever felt like you had to “put forth a face that would pass?”***

Clarification: Can you recall a time when you felt you had to put forth a version of yourself that would assist you in navigating/surviving the dominate culture in college; specifically, being a WOC and being active/involved on campus or off?

or

Felt you had to conceal parts of your identity to navigate your campus environment to be involved

APPENDIX G
INTERVIEW TWO PROTOCOL

Thank you so much for taking time to conduct a second interview with me (and for participating in the sister circle). Learning about your experience has been eye-opening.

In our session today, we are going to talk a little bit more about your experiences with leadership, specifically looking at the vision board you created. We also may double-back to a few questions from the first interview as they pertain to your vision board.

1. After our first interview, how were you feeling? How did thinking about your social identities, specifically as they related to your leadership experiences make you feel?
2. How did you feel about creating a vision board of your identities and leadership experiences?

Ask participant to share the general themes of the board. Ask questions about pieces that stand out and are interesting.

3. How do these images and/or words represent who you are and your experiences with leadership?

Shift gears to focus on the impact of college and future leadership aspirations:

4. In what ways has your institutional environment helped or hindered your growth as a WOC? As a WOC leader?
 - a. Can you share a specific story?
5. How do you find support to successfully carry out your leadership responsibilities?
6. Have you ever been met with resistance when trying to lead? Tell me about the situation?

How did you navigate it?

Final thoughts:

As a WOC, if you had to re-envision how leadership is understood, experienced, and enacted what would that look like to you?

APPENDIX H
VISION BOARD INSTRUCTIONS

*Vision boards are a creative way for you to express your thoughts, ideas, and inspirations visually. **The theme for this vision board is: My 'vision' of leadership.** Your vision board should capture what leadership means to you. Your vision board should visually capture who you are, how you have come to understand what leadership is, and how you view leadership within the context of your salient social identities This could include what inspires you, who inspires you, pictures, inspirational quotes, inspiring words, or whatever you feel captures your 'vision' of leadership.*

Vision boards can be created using a variety of mediums. There is no right way to create a vision board. Some may choose to cut out things from magazines and glue them on a poster board, paper, binder cover, or clipboard. Others may choose to make a digital vision board, gathering inspiration from various websites and compiling them in a word processing platform like Microsoft Word or PowerPoint. Others may elect to use a social media platform like Pinterest to organize your board. Whatever method you choose to complete your vision board is acceptable. If you have elected to participate in the sister circle dialogue, please bring your vision board with you. If you are unable to participate in the sister circle, please bring your vision board with you to your second interview.



Picture credit: www.newagehipster.co

If you have any issues or questions while creating your board, feel free to contact me: 872-216-2082 or nplumb@luc.edu.

APPENDIX I

EMAIL TO INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT MEET CRITERIA

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for expressing interest in participating in the study on Women of Color college students and leadership. Based on the demographic information provided, I regret to inform you that you do not meet all the study's criteria. Thank you for taking the time to complete the demographic survey.

Sincerely,

Natasha Turman
Principal Investigator
PhD Candidate, Higher Education
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX J

EMAIL TO INDIVIDUALS ONCE PARTICIPANT QUOTA IS MET

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for expressing interest in participating in the study on Women of Color college students and leadership. Thank you for taking the time to complete the demographic survey. You do meet the study's criteria; however, the participant quota has been met. Should participants withdraw from the study, I would like to be able to contact you in the future to participate. If you are interested in potential future participation, please respond back to this email. Thank you again for your interest and time.

Sincerely,

Natasha Turman
Principal Investigator
PhD Candidate, Higher Education
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX K
COMPOSITE VISION BOARD



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VITA

Dr. Turman's educational journey began in the gifted and talented enrichment programs within East Orange, New Jersey's public schools. Anchored by this firm foundation, she went on to graduate number five in her class at Hampton High School in Hampton, Virginia. Dr. Turman attended Spelman College, a historically Black all-women's college, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. She continued her studies at Old Dominion University where she earned a Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Dr. Turman reached the pinnacle of her formal educational journey at Loyola University Chicago where she earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Higher Education.

Professionally, Dr. Turman has worked in a variety of functional areas within the field of higher education and student affairs including multicultural affairs, residence life, leadership studies, and student activities. Most recently, while at Loyola University Chicago, Dr. Turman served as the Project Manager for the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership an international quantitative research study measuring socially responsible leadership.

Dr. Turman's research cuts across two distinct, yet complementary areas: gender and diversity in higher education and critical leadership education. These targeted foci allow her to examine who is excluded from the dominant narratives of leadership and post-secondary education, what systemic processes maintain this exclusion, and how institutions of higher education can be a catalyst for change. These research foci are actualized through scholarly publications, academic and professional presentations, and service.

